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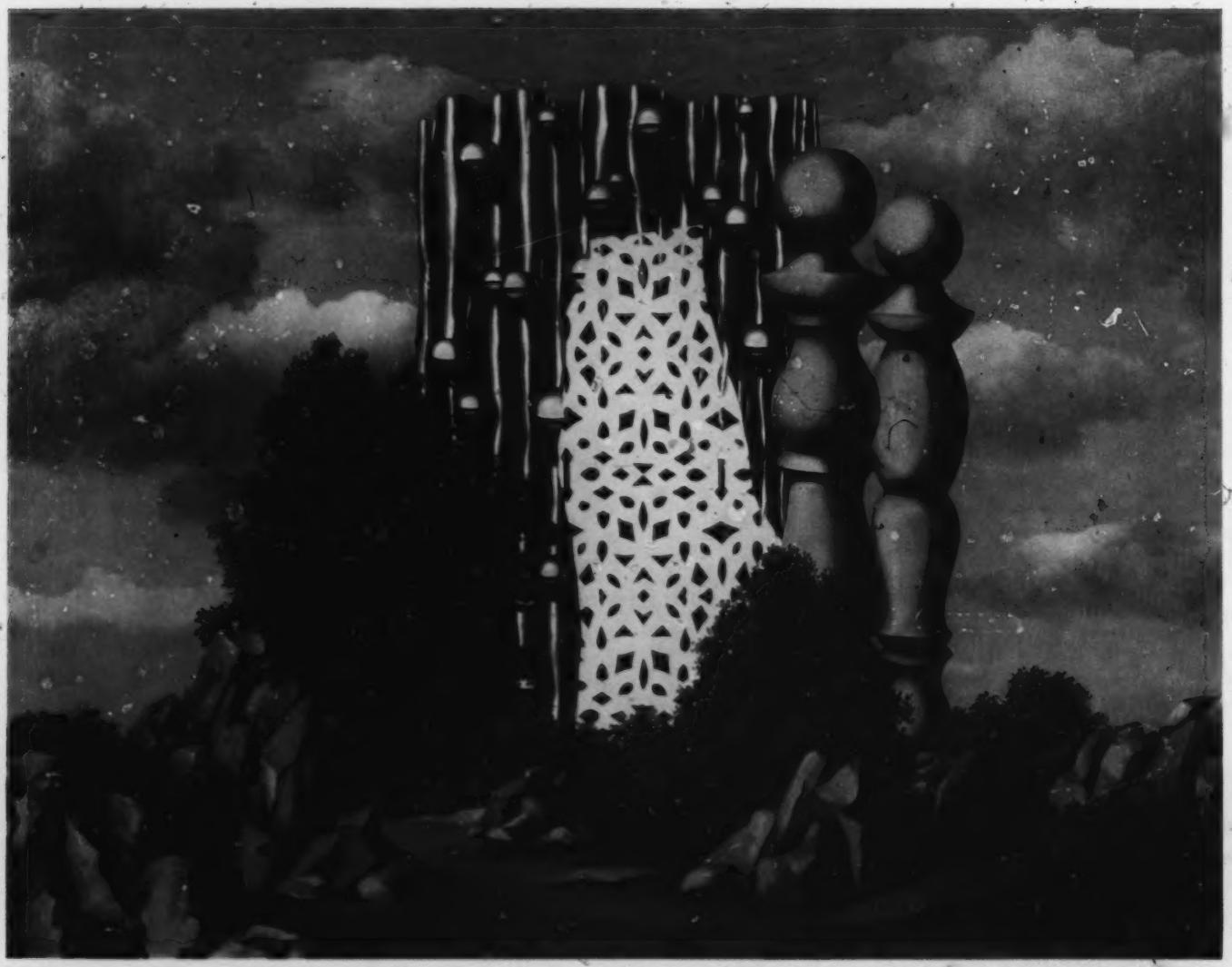
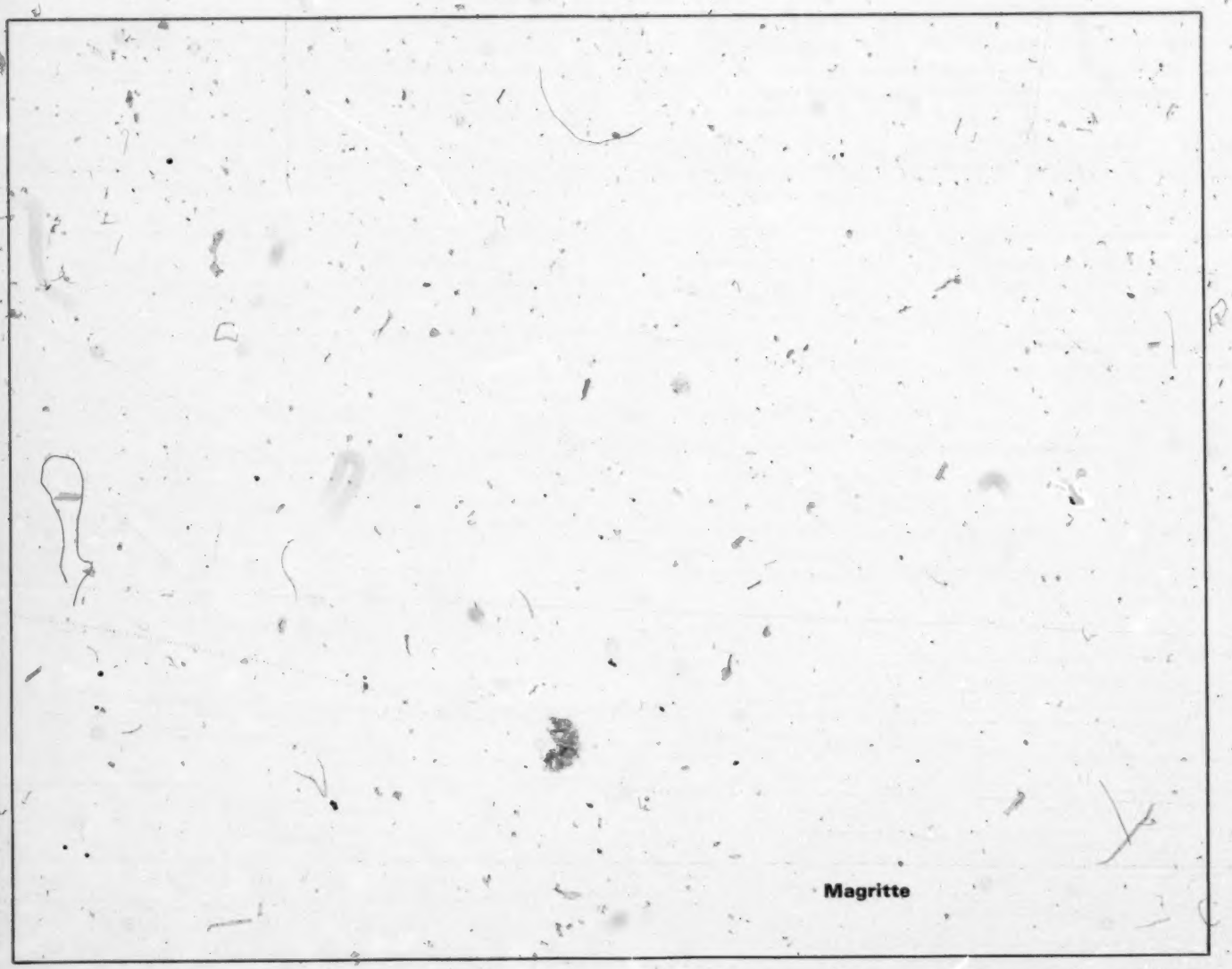
Magritte





Magritte

David Sylvester

The Arts Council of Great Britain

Catalogue of an exhibition of paintings by
René Magritte 1898–1967
organized by the Arts Council
at the Tate Gallery
14 February to 2 April 1969

Second edition, February 1969
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Acknowledgments

The Arts Council approached René Magritte in the spring of 1966 proposing that they should organize a major exhibition of his work, and the artist promised his full support. Since the time of his death, in August 1967, his widow has given us every possible assistance and we are very grateful for her cooperation.

The exhibition has been selected by Mr David Sylvester. He also installed it, with Miss Elizabeth Davison of the Arts Council, and devised the setting, which was designed by Mr Michael Brawne, M Arch. (MIT), AA Dip., ARIBA, who was also responsible for the lighting.

The exhibition is presented within the framework of the Anglo-Belgian Cultural Convention. We are grateful to HE Baron Jean van den Bosch, Belgian Ambassador in London, for his support and to Monsieur Emil Langui, formerly Directeur-Générale des Arts et Lettres, Ministère de l'Education Nationale et de la Culture. Monsieur Francis de Lulle, Chef du Service de la Propagande Artistique at the same Ministry, has given invaluable advice and has also cooperated in the practical arrangements. We are also indebted to Monsieur J. van Lerberghe, his predecessor, for his advice, and to Monsieur Jan R. Blancquaert, Cultural Counsellor, and Mademoiselle F. van Haelewyck, Cultural Attaché, Belgian Embassy in London, for their assistance. The Ministère de l'Education Nationale et de la Culture has given financial aid with transport and has contributed towards the cost of colour plates in this catalogue.

The response from owners has been outstandingly generous and we wish to record our gratitude to all those who have lent to this exhibition; their names will be found on page 135 of this catalogue. It was a sacrifice for many of them to part with pictures that are often away on loan and in this connexion we are particularly grateful to the Museum of Modern Art, New York and the Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

Mr and Mrs John de Menil, Monsieur E. L. T. Mesens and Monsieur and Madame Claude Spaak have, besides lending so generously from their own collections, helped us to secure loans from other collections. They also gave invaluable help in other directions.

We are greatly indebted to Monsieur Alexandre Iolas, the artist's agent, for his advice and cooperation and to Mr Brooks Jackson of the New York branch of the Iolas Gallery and Mademoiselle Bénédicte Pesle of the Paris branch for their assistance.

Among others whose help in various ways we wish to acknowledge are: Madame S. Bertouille, Société des Expositions du Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels; Miss Erica Brausen, Hanover Gallery, London; Miss Renée Cameron, French Embassy in London; Dr Luigi Carluccio; Monsieur André De Rache; Miss Charlotte Gilbertson, Iolas Gallery, New York; Miss Alicia Legge and Miss Pearl L. Moeller and their colleagues at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Monsieur Marcel Mabille; Mr George Melly; Monsieur Gustave J. Nellens; Sir Roland Penrose; and Mr Tony Reichart. We also thank all those who have allowed us to reproduce in this catalogue pictures from their collections which are not exhibited here and extracts from published texts.

The Trustees of the Tate Gallery and its Director, Mr Norman Reid, have provided space for the exhibition and we thank them once again for their hospitality. We also thank the Association Française d'Action Artistique and its Director, Monsieur André Burgaud, who have given us the usual facilities for transport.

Gabriel White
Director of Art
The Arts Council of Great Britain

Author's Note

This is essentially a 'picture-book'. Its argument is meant to be implicit in the choice and sequence of the plates, for Magritte's paintings speak for themselves more perhaps than any other paintings of our time. (The choice of works to be reproduced in colour has not been determined primarily by a desire to 'star' them but by the likelihood that they stood to gain more than others from being in colour.) The arrangement of the plates was decided in consultation with the designer, Gerald Cinamon.

Andrew Forge contributed several valuable suggestions here and to the introductory essay. I also discussed the introduction with E. L. T. Mesens, without the benefit of whose advice it would have been impossible to undertake this publication.

The translation of Magritte's text and titles was a task embarked upon rashly and completed laboriously and frustratingly. The difficulty with the titles is that they are poetic and often punning. The difficulty with the texts is that, when Magritte wrote for publication, he usually expressed his highly personal ideas in a rather laboured style. The problem in translating was to try and grasp what he meant without tidying up what he said. The translation of the texts, Magritte's and others', was mainly done by Sonia Orwell and Pamela Sylvester. The translation of the titles was done in collaboration with E. L. T. Mesens and with John Weightman. Jean-Marie Benoist assisted with texts and titles.

The dates usually ascribed to the pre-war works have been reconsidered. Thus, of the 62 such paintings in the exhibition and the three others illustrated, 18 were included in the 1965–6 New York retrospective and 10 of these are here dated differently; 12 others were included in the 1967 Rotterdam retrospective and six of these are dated differently. (In some cases, the difference has merely taken the form of putting, say, '1928 or 1929' rather than '1928' when there were no firm grounds for being definite.) Most of the changes lean on external evidence. For example, no. 42 in this catalogue, which is generally given to either 1934 or 1936, is dated 1933 on the back of the canvas in the artist's hand and in this particular case there is every reason to believe the inscription. Again, nos. 10, 11 and 12 are habitually given to, respectively, 1928, either 1929 or 1930, and 1928. But all three were exhibited in Brussels in January 1928; also, all three are canvases of standard French size and would therefore not have been painted before Magritte's move from Brussels to a Paris suburb in August 1927: they can therefore be ascribed with certainty to the last third of 1927. Whenever I have ascribed a painting to one particular year, there has either been external evidence of this sort or obvious stylistic evidence. It would not have been possible to attempt this work without the assistance of the remarkable bibliography by André Blavier appended to Patrick Waldberg's monograph or without information provided by E. L. T. Mesens.

I am also much indebted for information about Magritte and his ideas to his wife Georgette and to his friends Louis Scutenaire, Irène Hamoir, Claude Spaak and Harry Torczyner.

Others who have given advice or assistance of one kind or another are Joseph Capuano, Rosalyn Drexler, Patrick Hughes, Franoine Legrand, Francis de Lulle, George Melly, Pamela Sylvester and Richard Wollheim.

The staffs of the Tate Gallery, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique have been entirely helpful in providing documents and information.

Elizabeth Davison, my editor, has given advice in every department.

Georgette Magritte, Louis Scutenaire, Suzi Gablik and Philip M. Laski have been most generous in allowing the use of material in their copyright.

This corrected edition includes revisions of a few datings and of a large number of measurements.

It wasn't enough for Pharaoh to have seen seven fat kine eaten up by seven leanfleshed kine. He had to find a meaning. The meaning as interpreted turned out to be the same as that of the dream about ears of corn. Symbols are interchangeable.

Magritte resented any tendency to read his images as symbols. 'If one looks at a thing with the intention of trying to discover what it means, one ends up no longer seeing the thing itself, but thinking of the question that has been raised.'* The interpretation of an image was the denial of its mystery (the mystery of the visible). 'One cannot speak about mystery, one must be seized by it.'†

Pharaoh's dreams were interpreted because they were messages from God; ours because they are messages from ourselves. Magritte presents dreamlike images as experiences not messages. He evokes extreme or impossible physiological states or events which have an intense affective import – being crowded, being trapped, being immobilized, defying gravity, etc. – with great immediacy but no sensuous correlative, just as in dreams the action is all in one's head. He portrays uncanny happenings with a conspicuous absence of distortion, so that the artist seems to have no attitude towards the phenomenon and the spectator is not distracted by speculation as to what is meant, is left free to concentrate on what is there.

What is there can induce a dread as compelling, as consuming, as dread felt in a dream. It is not surprising when we feel this dread in the face of the great violent images of human helplessness – say, of Caravaggio's *Martyrdom of St Matthew* or Goya's *Third of May*. But Magritte is not a painter of martyrdoms or massacres. He can provoke a disquiet which as one goes on looking mounts to terror by, say, coolly fixing in mid-air something normally earthbound: orderly ranks of ordinary men (p. 126); everyday objects floating in front of faces (pp. 125, 18); or simply – excluding the affective charge of a human presence – a featureless sphere in an empty room (p. 24). The drama is impersonal: the suspension of gravity; the suspension of time. It's like the instinctive dread felt during a total eclipse.

Magritte produces aberrations in the behaviour of things that seem at once matter-of-fact and momentous. When arguing in a lecture that the displacement of objects could have its maximum effect only when these were 'very familiar objects', he went on to illustrate his point by saying that a 'child on fire will surely move us more than a distant planet burning itself out'.‡ Of course. But Magritte never painted a child on fire: he painted, say, tubas on fire (p. 49). He could make a burning tuba sufficiently disturbing.

I live on the ground floor of an old house divided into flats. The room I work in has large sash windows overlooking the front garden. A new tenant took to parking his large cream-coloured car in the garden, offside wheels on a footpath, nearside wheels in a shrubbery. All I felt I could see through the window was this cream hulk wedged in and trampling on growth. Every time I looked out, the cream monster might as well have been thrusting itself through the window into the room. What was happening outside seemed to be happening in my head. I felt the car was stuffed inside my brain.

This excessive reaction was conditioned by a whole complex of relevant and irrelevant factors involving my habits, my tastes, my sense of property, my prejudices about people, and a mass of feelings about my work, my family, my home and my inadequacies. If this displaced inanimate object was a persecutor, it was because it engaged this complex of facts and affects that were not manifest in its mere presence. But Magritte's displaced inanimate objects need nothing more than their appearance on the scene to have an equally exaggerated and upsetting effect. When he paints a village among whose houses geometric solids the size of houses have crammed themselves in (p. 77), or when he paints loaves of bread floating in mid-air outside a window (p. 95), these abnormalities instantly become my disequilibrium, my disorientation.

Magritte's avowed master was Chirico. But Chirico's eye invariably gravitates, like an expressionist movie director's, towards the spectacular, picturesque, vertiginous viewpoint. A Chirico composition is a kind of collage in which every element has been seen from a different position and each position provides an 'interesting' angle: a steep high or low angle, or an acutely oblique angle, or an extreme close-up or extreme long-shot. A picture by Magritte may be a kind of collage or may be a continuous space, but either way the viewpoint is straightforward, in terms of angle and in terms of distance: a safe medium shot. The composition is often symmetrical, is almost always blandly frontal, with figures posed perfectly full-faced or profiled and with receding planes placed parallel to the picture-plane in a shallow, clearly delimited space with no room for evocative perspectives.

Chirico, moreover, is a painter of late afternoon and early evening. Magritte's images are seen in broad daylight or occasionally by moonlight or have the heavy shadows and sharp accents of a room lit by one naked bulb.

When a child asking 'Why aren't there cracks in the sky?' made me think of Magritte, it wasn't because any such painting of his came to mind or because I recalled his own, less resonant, statement, 'The cracks we see in our houses and on our faces seemed to me more eloquent in the sky.'§ It was because the question wasn't a question with the logical form, 'Why aren't there pigs/two-headed birds/angels/space-ships from Mars

Magritte with a reproduction of *La grande guerre*, photographed by Bill Brandt in 1966

in the sky?' it wasn't a question about the existence or non-existence of certain possible phenomena within a given situation. It was a question which defined a situation by proposing the possibility of its being otherwise in a way that was by definition impossible. The child was using an implicit double-negative to clarify its awareness of the identity of sky. Magritte dealt in the absurd, not the fabulous. He didn't paint two-headed birds; he painted birds made of sky (p. 89) and made of stone (p. 99).

His image enhances the sense of what a thing is by making it what it is not. His large rock floating in the sky (p. 97) heightens awareness of the weight of rock. Conversely, the weight of his stone bird in flight heightens awareness of the marvellous buoyancy of a bird. The sight of his alternatives renders reality more mysterious.

His art is anything but freely fantastic. It is as rigorous as logic. It denies fact but not reason. It is argumentative in method, not associative. For example, a door exists so that people can walk through it: Magritte painted a door which looks as though someone had walked through it when it was shut (p. 79). A man with his back to us facing a mirror can see his reflection in it: in *La reproduction interdite*, Magritte made the reflection duplicate the back view (p. 118). A mermaid is half-human and half-fish: Magritte painted a mermaid in which the human and the fishy parts have changed ends (p. 71). The dominant feature of a torso is the rib-cage: Magritte painted a figure whose torso is a bird-cage (p. 75). Where a fireplace normally has a stove-pipe jutting-out, Magritte put a locomotive with its chimney smoking (p. 81).

In a lecture given in London in February 1937, he said: 'There is a secret affinity between certain images; it is equally valid for the objects which those images represent . . . We are familiar with birds in cages; interest is awakened more readily if the bird is replaced by a fish or a shoe; but though these images are strange they are unhappily accidental, arbitrary. It is possible to obtain a new image which will stand up to examination through having something final, something right, about it: it's the image showing an egg in the cage'.* Lecturing in Antwerp the following year he had more to say (*v.* p. 54) about this insistence of his that it wasn't enough to indulge in free association, that he was involved in an 'investigation' of reality directed towards the discovery of images which would have a certain inevitability: any object he dealt with presented a problem to which there was 'only one correct answer', an answer that was 'strictly predestined' – something already known but lost in the depths of the mind.

He said that this search for affinities had only begun in 1936, and that until then his method had been to bring together totally unrelated objects. He was in error as to the date, not for the only time in writings about himself: he proceeded to mention as examples of his method since 1936 several images which first appeared in 1933–34. Furthermore, at least one painting done in 1931, *Le calcul mental* (p. 77) presents a clear affinity between the two kinds of object juxtaposed – the houses, hollow constructions with openings in their walls, and the cubic and spherical blocks, solid and impenetrable masses which are also caricatures of buildings in another style. Before this, it was a matter of combining unrelated elements. On the other hand, the main emphasis in his earlier work was not so much on the juxtaposition of objects as on the analysis of pictorial language – the relation between images and words (pp. 27, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34), the relation between images of the body and images of objects (pp. 17, 18, 20, 23, 41), the relation between the parts of a polyptych (pp. 37, 38, 39, 40, 41), the relation between a framed image in a room and the space of the room (pp. 25, 40, 41); the relation between images of natural and of man-made objects (pp.41, 43). The particular feeling for paradox which Magritte later brought to bear on his investigation of objects was first brought to bear on an investigation of pictorial semantics. There always was argument.

René François Ghislain Magritte was born on November 21, 1898, at Lessines, in the province of Hainaut in Belgium. He was the eldest of three brothers. His father Léopold was a minor industrialist. He grew up in various small towns. When he was twelve, his mother Régina drowned herself in the River Sambre. In 1913, at a fair in Charleroi, he first met Georgette Berger. From 1916 he studied intermittently at the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, where his family settled in 1918. In 1920 he met Georgette again by chance. In 1922, after he had completed his compulsory term of military service, they were married. They had no children. In August 1927 they moved to a Paris suburb, Le Perreux-sur-Marne. In 1930 they returned to Brussels.

Between this time and his death in 1967, Magritte's sorties from Belgium were infrequent. The longest of them was when he fled to France for some months, leaving Georgette behind, in the early days of the war. (He had once designed an anti-Nazi poster and in a lecture had called Hitler an *emmerdeur*.)

He preferred Brussels to Paris, in Brussels always lived in outlying parts, and even during his spell in Paris chose to reside in a suburb.

When he left Paris, he abandoned a Surrealist *milieu* where the painters tended to be subordinate to the writers, especially, of course, to Breton, though Magritte seems to have been less amenable than most to Breton's hectoring. (There is the story, for example, of his walking out of a Surrealist gathering with Georgette when Breton attacked her for turning up in a necklace with a crucifix.) He was certainly not averse to the company of writers: Eluard was his closest

friend in Paris and most of his Brussels friends were writers (Mesens, Lecomte, Goemans, Nougé, Scutenaire, Irène Hamoir, Spaak, Mariën, Colinet). But in Brussels he was the centre of the circle.

Magritte's one narrative picture of consequence is *L'assassin menacé* (p. 111), painted in 1926 or the early months of 1927 and one of the two biggest canvases in his first one-man show (the other was *Le joueur secret*, in the Nellens collection). Here for once there are clear indications of the events leading up to and likely to ensue from the situation that is presented. Magritte's situations generally have no history: no evidence is offered as to how they came about, only occasionally is there a hint of what will happen next, and these provoke more questions than they provide answers. So, in a slightly later painting of a figure with a suitcase (p. 113), there is no clue as to her destiny or destination, or, indeed, as to whether she intends a journey. But the assassin has clearly prepared for his getaway and will clearly be arrested as he leaves. Certainly, questions arise as to whether he will be caught because he stopped to listen to a record or whether he would have been caught anyway, and, if the former, whether he stopped to listen because he wanted to be caught; also, whether or not he is aware of being under surveillance. But all this is literature. We may not know what is going on in the actors' heads, but we do at least know roughly what is going on in the action. Whereas, after this, the action itself is mysterious. There are several subsequent paintings by Magritte which have the air of illustrations to crime stories or adventure stories (pp. 60, 80, 108), only they have no story we can discern.

But if *L'assassin menacé* is in this sense an isolated work, it is a key work in the sense that it contains prototypes – or very early examples – of several important recurrent motifs. It has bowler hats and a suitcase, and the horn of the gramophone can be seen as an *Ur*-tuba. The perspectival lines between the floorboards were frequently to be used again to help define a space. The wrought-iron balustrade might have been the starting point of the paper cut-outs which begin to appear in the latter half of 1927 (p. 23). Above all, it makes a point of the duplication of persons, in the foreground twins and background triplets. (The triplets, in their ambiguity, are the most characteristic element in the painting. It is clear that they are among the threats to the assassin, but it is not clear whether they are colleagues of the detectives in the foreground or something like the Eumenides.)

All these various motifs can be there at once because more different things are happening at once than is customary with Magritte. In his first major work, he is still on the point of realizing that his forte lies in dealing with one or two concepts at a time.

L'évidence éternelle (p. 37) might be meant to evoke the serial – to be continued in our next – or to suggest that all five panels could be dispersed to the corners of the earth like a torn-up map the parts of which have to be re-united before the treasure can be found. What it certainly does is to make the point that the partition of the figure conveys no sense whatever of dismemberment of a body, that, on the contrary, it heightens the cool tenderness of the painting. This may be because – not only by dividing and separating the parts but by rendering each of them on a slightly different scale – it destroys the convention of the nude in art by which a figure is seen as a whole in a way we do not habitually see those bodies we see naked in life. We are normally close enough to those bodies to focus only on one part or another, and we tend to remember them as a sum of those parts. *L'évidence éternelle* seems to objectify the effort to reconstruct from memory a body known too well to be visualised as a whole.

The body framed in *Le palais d'une courtisane* (p. 25): is she in a picture, in a mirror, in the adjoining room? One's certainty is a feeling that she is somehow trapped. As to explanation, reason decrees that she must be in a picture, since the conjunction of the torso's size and distance from the floor makes nonsense of both the other possibilities, and this inference is reinforced by the torso's Michelangelesque flavour, which spells Art. And still one's instinct is to reject the idea that this is no more than a picture. One has an irrational feeling that it is a mirror but not a reflection, that she is somehow in the mirror and only in the mirror.

It turns out that the problem is resolved by the painting's original title (inscribed and deleted on the back of the canvas): *Le miroir vivant*. No doubt one reason for the change of title was that the earlier one left no room for doubt. Another reason may have been the thought of two-way mirrors in courtesans' palaces.

In this work of the late 1920s the question is whether the image within an image is a picture or a reflection. After 1930, the question is usually whether it is a picture or a pane of glass. There is always perfectly clear evidence that it is not a pane of glass. Nevertheless, every time I confront *La condition humaine I* (p. 51), I begin by seeing the canvas as a pane of glass: the luminosity does it.

But there are also the paintings in which the image outside the window has been painted on the glass of the window itself and the glass has shattered, such as *Le domaine d'Arnheim* (p. 53). (On first seeing it, I thought how terrifying that a window should be made of plaster.)

The wings of the mountain face seem to be beating as if they will beat inside the window, in my face. It's as if the wings might have shattered the window. Certainly, where they are, out beyond the window, they seem more menacingly inside the room than their image

on the window would have done had it remained intact.

Bringing the outside inside is one of Magritte's recurrent moves, and the theme of the painting indoors of the landscape through the window is an avowed way of doing it (*v.* p. 54). Here the broken bits inside of the replica of the scene outside makes the scene itself seem more inside than outside.

The early paintings were sometimes derived from collage studies, for example, *La fin des contemplations* (p. 39): in the study, the background shapes were cut out of sheet music. The painting maintains the feeling of something put together and, even more, the feeling that its components have been cut or torn into shape. In fact, it is something of a collage in a physical sense as well: dotted over each of the background shapes are six stud fasteners. Other paintings of the 1920s in which the sense of collage is in one way or another an important part of the content are *Paysage* (p. 62), *La doublure du sommeil* (p. 26), *Personnage marchant vers l'horizon* (p. 29), *Les idées de l'acrobate* (p. 57) and above all, *Les jours gigantesques* (p. 61), where a collage thought is used to highly dramatic effect. The fragment of the man committing the assault is a shape cut out to follow the silhouette of the woman on whom he is superimposed. They are stuck together: there is utter desperation in their pushing and pulling.

Le masque vide – the one with pictures (p. 40) – presents a different kind of collage – as against collage on a surface, collage erected in space. Its use of compartmentation was developed in *Au seuil de la liberté* (p. 41). The polyptych is pushed from the middle of the room to the back, further panels are brought in on either side, a large object is wheeled onto the floor, and at first one has the impression of looking at a room with one window showing the façade opposite and the one next to it the sky. In *L'annonciation* (p. 43) the elements are taken out of their framework and placed out of doors, with some superimposition, to make a majestic construction of antithetic forms: rounded and flat, smooth and sharp, hard and soft, dense and flimsy. There is the further antithesis between the natural forms, the rocks and shrubs and trees and clouds, all jagged and irregular, and the man-made forms in wood, metal and paper, all presenting shapes of a perfect symmetry and all as grand, as mysterious, as useless as art.

The slightly earlier *Le faux miroir* (p. 87), the first of the paintings with intrusive skies, has a collage feeling which persists in many of its successors. *La grande famille* (p. 89) has a charming ambiguity in its notional assemblage. It seems at first as if it began with an overall dark sky on top of which the cut-out bright sky was pasted. But then it seems possible that the picture began as bright sky, that the bird was a negative shape cut out of the superimposed dark sky. Next, it begins to seem possible that the bright sky was there first, was then entirely covered by a sheet of dark sky, a shape in which was then peeled off to reveal the light. (But the whole mood of this picture is ambiguous. The bird's silhouette, with its talons, is more eagle than dove; furthermore, it looms up from the horizon like a waterspout. Nevertheless, it seems a benign presence.)

Most of Magritte's paintings since 1931 present an illusionistic space, but it still sometimes seems that an element has been cut out and stuck into the composition, as, for example, in *Le sens des réalités* (p. 97), *Les valeurs personelles* (p. 85), *Le fils de l'homme* (p. 125), and *Golconde* (p. 126), where the men in the air resemble those old-fashioned painted ply-wood figures standing outside shops.

This persistence of thinking in collage terms corresponds with Magritte's conception of the poetic image in painting as an unfamiliar conjunction of familiar objects. 'I can only show what is visible through painting. (The invisible, that is, what light cannot illuminate, has no appearance for painting to represent.) My conception of painting is strictly limited to placing colours together in such a way that their real appearance vanishes and allows the emergence of an image which I call poetic and which accords with the interest we naturally feel in the unknown. This image *brings together* familiar shapes from the visible world.'* There are paintings, indeed, in which Magritte does this in the most literal sense, as if building an assemblage with real objects. In *Le voyageur* (p. 98), a variety of things are put together to make a sphere. *Les marches de l'été* (p.55) seems to be about the process itself of piecing parts together. It shows the building of sky, the building of earth, the fitting-together of fragments of a torso which are not parts of the same torso, for the abdomen is solid, as if done in clay, while the thorax is like a papier-mâché mask.

In *Le dormeur téméraire* (p. 17), the components are put together in terms of relief. The objects on the tablet do not seem to be carved and painted signs but real objects embedded in a soft surface (the tablet was in fact inspired by molten lead). They are pressed into the tablet as the sleeper is pressed into the wooden box, as the box is pressed into the width of the canvas, as the tablet and the box's rim seem pressed from behind against the picture-plane

Besides the many paintings he made that are about persistent conventions of representational art, Magritte also produced a number of re-interpretations of famous masterpieces, such as the *Perspective: Madame Récamier de David* (p. 72), *Perspective: le Balcon de Manet*, and *Le bouquet tout fait*, in which a figure from the *Primavera* is copied on the back of a bowler-hatted man. He also produced several evocations of or satires upon various styles of popular art. *La clef des songes* (p. 30) clearly refers to school primers, *L'air et la*

chanson (p. 33) to shop and inn signs, *La fin des contemplations* (p. 39) to stereoscopic images. The *Portrait de E. L. T. Mesens* is a parody of a poster made with the intention of reproducing it and billposting it round the town as an advertisement for nothing. *Le rossignol* is a send-up of devotional paintings in which God the Father appears on a cloud above while below is an express train in a landscape as in a travel poster.

In all such cases the allusion has to be grasped for the picture to make its point. But there are also cases in which Magritte based an image on an existing model purely to suit himself. It has lately been discovered that the top left quarter of the Tate's *L'homme au journal* is a rather faithful copy of a steel-engraved advertisement for a domestic stove in a magazine. I have also been informed that *L'assassin menacé* (p. 111) is a transcription of a scene from one of the *Fantômas* films. And Claude Spaak tells me that the first of the paintings with a shattered window, *La clef des champs*, 1933, was inspired by a cartoon in which a heavy lorry had crashed through the windows of a drawing-room occupied by a phlegmatic English milord: Spaak can't remember the caption. There may be many other such cases. If more come to light, it will be interesting to see whether the models are invariably images from popular art.

For my part I believe that there are other paintings by Magritte which are based on works of fine art but about which I am uncertain whether he meant the allusions to be grasped or whether he thought of the sources as his private concern. I incline to think he meant them to be spotted. In the first place, I suspect that during his Paris period he deliberately parodied artists of the abstract wing of the Surrealists: in *Personnage marchant vers l'horizon* (p. 29) and *Le corps bleu* (p. 34), Arp; in *L'usage de la parole* (p. 27), the recent work of Miró.

Secondly, I suspect that there are further allusions to the old masters. I have a feeling that *Cosmogonie élémentaire* (p. 73) is based on a neo-classic picture. I also suspected that *L'aimable vérité* (p. 19) was an interpretation of Leonardo's *Last Supper* until I learnt from Scutenaire that indeed it was (and that it was painted after a visit to Milan; also that Leonardo was Magritte's preferred painter). What remains tantalizingly uncertain is whether the picture was a secret homage or was intended as a recognizable homage. The second appears likely: the recesses in the wall seem a deliberate clue.

Finally, I suspect that there are certain interpretations of ancient Egyptian art and that these only make sense if Magritte intended the allusions to be seen. Francine Legrand has argued persuasively that *L'homme du large* (p. 78) is based upon figures of Osiris.* The paintings I have in mind are of the same period. In *Le dormeur téméraire* (p. 17), the sleeper's objects are presented as hieroglyphs carved in low relief. The bird is unmistakably Egyptian; the bowler hat is a bourgeois counterpart of the crown of Upper Egypt; the mirror and the bow might be alternative variants of the hieroglyph symbolizing Life. The shape and colour of the tablet recall predynastic slate palettes; the relief, however, is more like those on the walls of tombs.

In *Les objets familiers* (p. 18), the space is the non-space of low relief. The sponge, the jug, the lemon are placed before the eyes of the profile heads as hieroglyphs are placed before the eyes of profile heads in Egyptian tomb reliefs. The convention in these reliefs is that the hieroglyphs are not seen by the figures, are not part of their space. Here the suspension of that convention is suggested: the objects have floated off the wall into space and the rapt gaze at nothing of Egyptian figures becomes a gaze hypnotized by the floating objects. The positions of the sea-shell and the ribbon demonstrate the logical consequence of depicting these gazing heads from the front.

During the 1920s Magritte did commercial art in order to survive: he designed wallpaper, posters, sheet-music covers, collage illustrations for furriers' catalogues, etc. Much as this work bored and irritated him,† he always clung to his ability to be a hack, even when, in the last fifteen years of his life, he no longer had to struggle and scheme to earn a living. Mesens holds that the main reason why he did so many paintings during the time of his first contract, 1926–29, was that he was getting paid by the square metre. Throughout his career he rarely seems to have disdained a portrait commission, however little involvement the results usually show he felt. He turned out numerous replicas or slight variants of his best paintings, and for the most part they are at best indifferent. No other twentieth-century artist of his stature (and those of greater stature can be counted on one hand) has produced so many bad paintings. This has been held against him, as if he were a painter in the same sense as Matisse or Miró.

'Magritte', writes Scutenaire, 'has had no desire to serve painting, only to utilise it, to use it as a tool of knowledge and liberation.'‡ The great hero-figures of modern art have been, Duchamp apart, precisely those who did 'serve painting', served it as if it was God, may have endlessly questioned themselves as to what they must do as artists, but never questioned the rightness of serving art (and those who professed to be 'anti-art' were no exception). 'The work of most artists', Magritte said, 'is conceived under the illusion that it needs to be done – that the world would be somehow endangered if it weren't, and that it is therefore necessary to the world. (Unless of course it is just done to make money.) It would be all the same to me if my paintings were destroyed. Life continues.'§

Magritte's commercialism could well be, among other things, a form of iconoclasm, a rejection of the modern artist's precious integrity. Certainly, he liked to feel that he

was free of 'bourgeois' individualism and aestheticism. 'This detached way of representing objects seemed to me to stem from a universal style in which individual idiosyncracies and preferences have no part. For instance, I would use light blue where it was needed to depict the sky, would never, like the bourgeois painter, depict the sky as a pretext for showing off a favourite blue against a favourite grey.'* He was like the old masters in his willingness to use painting to serve something other than painting. And in his concomitant readiness to do what his patrons asked. For example, he would sometimes realize their proposal of a synthesis of two of his habitual themes. It looks to me as if *Le cap des tempêtes* (p. 96) could have resulted from a request to conjoin his primordial figure of the reckless sleeper (p. 17) with one of the large rocks he had lately been depicting in landscapes from which man was resonantly absent (pp. 97, 103). Many other such syntheses merely look contrived. In the same way, while most of the replicas and near-replicas would not be missed, this is not always the case. For example, there are to my knowledge three admirable versions of *Le chambre d'écoute* (p. 83); again, *La grande guerre* (v.p. 6). is hardly less fine – some say it is finer – than its prototype, *Le fils de l'homme* (p. 125).

On the other hand, against Magritte's practice of running a single-handed workshop must be set his insistence that 'Inspiration gives the painter what he must paint'† (written in block capitals in his manuscript) and 'Inspiration is the circumstance in which likeness arises.'‡ There was clearly a conflict within Magritte between almost automatic allegiance to romantic doctrines of the genesis of art – and romantic insistence that mystery must be inviolate – and his disdain for the romantic legend of the artist.

And surrounding this was a willed doubt that was purely contemporary. 'He thinks nowadays', wrote Scutenaire, 'it would be a good thing to replace dictatorial slogans like "Art for Art's sake" and "Art for life's sake" with "God knows what for God knows what's sake".'§

Among the group of neo-fauve paintings done suddenly in 1948 is one of a girl making love to herself (p. 63). A nude painted in 1926 (p. 62) is caressed and pricked and strangled by branches winding themselves around her body which also – with the result that they come to seem part of her – resemble the system of veins and arteries in physiological diagrams. In a painting of 1928 of a rape or assault (p. 61), a sort of cut-out of part of the back view of a man is superimposed upon a nude woman so that the struggling figures become virtually one. A reclining female nude of 1943 (p. 64), done in the Renoiresque manner which Magritte often affected at this time, is painted in motley: one colour each for the head, the torso, the two arms, the two legs: the way her yellow leg is entwined with her blue leg always gives me the illusion that the yellow leg belongs to another person lying by her far side.

A contemporaneous painting shows a river-god (p. 65) with an erect penis in the form of a nude woman. Another, more oblique variant on the hermaphrodite can be found in Magritte's reversed mermaid (p. 71). Primarily, she is, of course, what Robert Melville has called 'the practical man's mermaid'.** At the same time, the fish's head which is her upper half has a somewhat phallic presence. This suggestion becomes explicit in two later images: the reversed merman with a peg-leg cuddling a nymph (p. 70), and a drawing, reproduced on a poster in 1945††, which represents a normal mermaid lying on her back and a reversed merman swimming just above her. It may be that in *Le viol* (p. 67) too there is a secondary metamorphosis on the same lines, one that would explain the title: the owner's wife suggests that the torso-head on its long neck is penetrating the hair.

It has been said by Irène Hamoir that Magritte 'uses man in his images exactly like any other object'.‡‡ The converse is also true, as in the suffocating image of an apple magnified until it fills a room (p. 83).

The room has room for nothing else, we can't get in. The apple is an invader, an occupying force, at any rate a squatter. We have suffered a loss of space. The apple packs the space like the horse and fallen rider in Caravaggio's *Conversion of St Paul*. That is to say, it not only occupies the space within the picture but pushes out into our space, as if threatening an assault. But in the Caravaggio the threat is a spilling-over of convulsive action. Here the bulging apple is impassive, not only still but blandly inexpressive, not only still but solidly compact. A placid fruit is charged with aggression.

There is another room (p. 85) in which the bed, the wardrobe and the rugs are of normal size, while a comb, a matchstick, a glass, a bar of soap and a shaving-brush are grossly magnified. The comb leans back against the corner like a thug spoiling for a fight; the shaving-brush crouches above the wardrobe like a Thurber wife. The magnification is disquieting in that it has happened to objects we habitually pick up in our hands and scarcely notice except when picking them up – as against small objects that are used where they stand (such as ash-trays, clocks, vases, table-lamps). In consequence, the magnified objects call our own scale in question. We are either dominated by things we constantly handle or we have grown with them, in which case our size is adding to the congestion.

This room is even full of sky. Magritte's substitutions of sky for an opaque surface – wall, curtain or whatever – generally induce an exhilarating sense of breakthrough, of release (pp. 41, 86, 88). Here the sky also works oppressively, for its activity increases the congestion.

In the room with the apple, the sense of suffocation is immediate; here, cumulative.

This may be why it reminds me of the cabin scene in *A Night at the Opera*, and – less literally but more relevantly – of *A Terribly Strange Bed*.

Some of the images of levitation (pp. 97, 98, 99) induce a feeling of euphoria like the sensation of floating above one's body that certain drugs can induce. Others (pp. 93, 94, 95) give me something of the sort of sickening apprehension I get from the images of flight in Goya's *Proverbs*, especially that of the four bulls.

The disquieting effect may be linked to the presence of some ambiguity about the objects in flight. For example, the loaves in *La légende dorée*, though very plainly loaves, seem to be something else as well – as, say, the airborne boulders are not – seem a blind species of animal life. And the direction and speed of their movement are altogether equivocal. They may be hovering, with a slight rise and fall, or may be steadily rising, or – somehow less likely – slowly descending, or they may be passing across the view, perhaps in a concerted fly-past, perhaps in opposite directions, in which case a collision may be imminent.

Turned to stone, the men are at peace with the outside world (pp. 106, 107). The stone parcel and the scattered stones which might be fragments of themselves are reverently handled and regarded as if they were sacramental. It seems as though a fellow-feeling with the stones brings the men into contact with each other.

The living things that are petrified – birds and mermaids as well as humans – seem all the more tender and vulnerable (pp. 99, 100, 101). Where there are no living things in the petrified scenes, there seems no possibility whatever that there might be. *Souvenir de voyage III* (p. 104) is like a dwelling suddenly abandoned which will never be visited again. *La parole donnée* (p. 105) has the violence of an earthquake at the start of time. *La clef de verre* (p. 103) is an image of total desolation intolerant of any form of life other than that of stone.

There is a penetrating silence, a terrible depth of silence, in some great art. In Egyptian sculpture of the Old and Middle Kingdoms. In Petrus Christus and van Eyck. Two modern artists who have it are Magritte and Giacometti.

It would be difficult to think of another artist who has made so many paintings of single figures in which that figure turns his back to the onlooker (pp. 29, 109, 122, 123). There is even a commissioned portrait of a back view (p. 118) with the sitter (Edward James) facing a mirror which reflects his back view. But these are only the most blatant examples of the general reluctance of Magritte's figures to show their faces (except, of course, in his more normal commissioned portraits). They do, certainly, often show them in profile (pp. 18, 39, 56, 61, 63). But a profile face is safely impersonal : it is like a face on a medallion ; more important, its owner is unaware of being looked at. A face really becomes a face only when it faces us. Magritte seems to be taking this view in certain paintings with two or more figures in which he allows an uninterrupted view of profile faces but contrives the partial concealment of faces turned towards us, whether with some rational pretext (p. 106) or with none (p. 18). (There are also paintings of two figures (pp. 107, 108) one of whose faces is seen in profile while the other turns his back.)

Magritte employs four main strategies by which to conceal or obliterate a face turned towards us. One is by metamorphosis, as in *L'homme du large* (p. 78), *Paysage* (p. 62), *Le thérapeute* (p. 75), *Le principe du plaisir* (p. 120). (He uses a reverse metamorphosis when he brings out the image of a face implicit in the female torso (pp. 25, 44, 67) ; indeed, these are perhaps the only faces in his work which have an open and expressive gaze.)

The second method is to decapitate the figure, as in *Les cornes du désir* (p. 119) or *Une panique au moyen âge* of 1927 (Scutenaire collection). In *Les chasseurs au bord de la nuit* (p. 60) (one of the groups combining a profile of one man with a back view of another) the man seen from behind is decapitated. An early variation on the missing head is *Le genre nocturne* (p. 115), where a woman seems to be raising her hands to hide her face until it is seen that she is hiding a void. Further variations appeared in a series of male figures painted in 1966. In *Le pèlerin* there is a void between the collar and the bowler hat and a face is floating to the left of it (in the photograph opposite, this face is concealed by the artist's). In *Le chemin de Damas* there is a void between the collar and the bowler hat and to the left are the head and naked shoulders of a man. In *Le paysage de Baucis*, two eyes, a nose and a mouth are fixed in the void between the collar and the trilby hat.

The third device is to fix an object in space immediately in front of a face, as in the early *Les objets familiers* (p. 18) and several late paintings of men in bowler hats (pp. 6, 121, 125). (Whereas the single bowler-hatted men and those in groups of two or three are reluctant to reveal their faces, there is no such inhibition in the two paintings of a multitude of bowler-hatted men, *Le mois des vendanges* (p. 110) and *Golconde* (p. 126). Presumably sheer force of numbers makes these faces impersonal enough for safety.)

Magritte's remaining way of making the face invisible involves no suspension of natural laws, but simply a reversion to blind man's buff. This occurs in certain early paintings, such as *L'histoire centrale* (p. 113) and *Les amants*, of which there are two variant images, kissing (p. 117) and cheek-to-cheek. The face is wholly veiled by a piece of cloth, rather as the face of the artist's

Magritte with *Le pèlerin*, photographed by Lothar Wolleh in 1967

mother is known to have been veiled by her clothing when she was fished out of the river in which she had drowned herself.

Magritte's bowler-hatted men came to be equated with himself, an equation he would seem to have endorsed, if not inspired, through photographs he posed for, from the 1930s onwards (pp. 6, 13). For himself the bowler would have been the key item in his disguise as small shopkeeper or clerk in his Sunday best. Mesens has told me how Magritte made a point of never buying himself a stylish bowler, one that would suit his face (Lock's do have an agent in Brussels), but always a standardized, indifferent, product, allowing no intervention of preference, of taste.

Most of the bowler-hatted men date from the fifties and sixties, but they appear in two of the major works of the mid-twenties, *L'assassin menacé* (p. 111) and *Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (p. 122). Again, in two early paintings which present inventories of objects, *Le dormeur téméraire* (p. 17) and the original version (in the Hersaint collection) of *La clef des songes*, there are two objects common to both inventories, a lighted candle and a bowler hat (a well-matched Freudian couple).

At that time especially, the bowler was a badge of comedy as much as of conformity. Stan Laurel said: 'The bowler-hat to me has always seemed to be a part of a comic's make-up for as far back as I can remember. I'm sure that's why Charlie wore one. Most of the comics we saw as boys wore them.'* There are or were some early drawings and collages with specifically Chaplinesque figures. And it does seen possible that the *promeneur solitaire* walking away into the landscape – prototype of several later images – could have been suggested by Chaplin's usual signing-off shot.

In *Les rêveries*, the bowler-hatted man is a lonely dreamer; in *L'assassin menacé*, the bowler-hatted men are representatives of law and order waiting to trap and cudgel a lonely dreamer. The menacing trio of standardized bare-headed men lined-up outside the window at the back of the room, gazing impassively at the oblivious criminal, become, thirty years later, in *Le mois des vendanges* (p. 110), the menacing crowd of standardized bowler-hatted men lined-up outside the window at the back of a room, gazing impassively at ourselves. I say 'ourselves', but in fact feel entirely alone in confronting them. They seem accusing, or, if not that, at least hostile. The standardized bowler-hatted multitude in *Golconde* (p. 126), on the other hand, do not, for some reason, strike me as alien. I find myself identifying with them, so that the picture seems to be about my non-uniqueness.

It is possible that they are coming down like rain or that they are ascending or that they are going up and down in invisible lifts. I tend to see them as if they were on a parade-ground in the air. On other parade-grounds, the ranks of men shoulder to shoulder have a consoling togetherness. Here, where their spacing isolates them, making each one vulnerable, they are as hopelessly apart as they are alike. Because the distances between them are both uniform and unnaturally wide, they do not seem to have moved into position, they seem to have been moved. (Magritte was addicted to chess.) They are stuck there like repetitions of an ornamental device. In fact they are parts of a pattern like a wallpaper pattern, infinitely repeatable and extendable. They are a sample of an infinity of identically helpless beings.

The single figures of bowler-hatted men are depersonalized by the concealment of their faces, are controlled through their domination by an object (pp. 121, 123, 125). The apple in front of a face looks like a form of defence and like a form of insult. But it looks much more as if it had attached itself to the man behind it, whether as a monstrous growth or as a free-floating entity which – as in *Les objets familiers* (p. 18) – is like a fixation objectified, a thing that has taken possession.

The blasphemous title of one of the versions of this image, *Le fils de l'homme* (p. 125) – the other is called *La grande guerre* (*v.*p. 6) – seems apt, given the identification of the bowler-hatted men with the artist and the association, implicit in a story Magritte told about his boyhood (*v.*p. 22), of the magical act of painting with descent to and return from the grave. Irène Hamoir, who thought up the title, has told me that the theological reference was not intended and, indeed, that Magritte later expressed concern that it might be supposed it was. But he also constantly expressed abhorrence of any symbolic interpretation of his images, and the fact is that the objects he chose to attach to the bowler-hatted men are often irredeemably symbolic objects. The son of man has a symbol of the Fall before his eyes, another (p. 121) the symbol of the Holy Ghost. The attributes of the figure called an intimate friend (p. 123) are bread and wine. There is also a picture of a city-suited figure (p. 120), somewhat in the manner of devotional images of the Sacred Heart, with the head lost in a holy light.

It is fitting. Magritte behaves like God. He makes fire burn without consuming, puts boulders in the sky, pins clouds to the ground, turns men to stone, makes stone birds fly, forbids us to look upon his face, etc. At the same time, the world he controls is inhabited by versions of himself who seem to have no freedom – images which correspond with his stated image of himself as an artist whose iconography results from discovery of the one correct and predestined solution to the problem of dealing with a given object and whose style is a universal style which leaves no room for the indulgence of personal aesthetic preferences. 'I think we are responsible for the universe, but this does not mean that we decide anything.'†

References

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Page

5* In Suzi Gablik, 'A conversation with René Magritte', *Studio international*, vol. 173, no. 887, London, March 1967, p. 128.

5† *Ibid.*, p. 129.

5‡ In Louis Scutenaire, *René Magritte*, Brussels, Librairie Sélection, 1947, p. 80. (The lecture published in Scutenaire's book is a revised version, delivered in 1939, of a lecture entitled 'La ligne de vie' given at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Antwerp on November 20, 1938. This has not been published in its entirety. Libraries having photocopies of the manuscript, which is in the possession of Claude Spaak, include those of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.)

5§ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

7* *Ibid.*, p. 38.

9* Letter to J. van Lennep, quoted van Lennep, 'L'Homme du large,' *Fantasmagie*, Brussels, September 1968, p. 4.

10* 'Trois oeuvres représentatives du surréalisme', *Bulletin des Musées de Belgique*, Brussels, 1965 (appeared 1967), pp. 90–1.

10† 'Esquisse autobiographique' in Palais des Beaux-Arts, Bruxelles, *René Magritte*, Brussels, Editions de la Connaissance, 1954, p. 10.

10‡ *Op. cit.*, p.8. (Scutenaire's text was written in 1942, remained unpublished until 1947.)

10§ In Gablik, *loc. cit.*, p. 128.

11* In Scutenaire, *op. cit.*, pp. 78–9.

11† In Obelisk Gallery, London, *Magritte: paintings, drawings, gouaches*, ed. Philip M. Laski, London, 1961, p. 7.

11‡ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

11§ *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

11** In an unpublished lecture, 'The humour and eroticism of Surrealism', given at the Institute of Contemporary Arts London, *c.* 1953.

11†† The poster is reproduced in Patrick Waldberg, *René Magritte*, with bibliography by André Blavier, Brussels, André De Rache, 1965, p. 300.

11‡‡ In Obelisk Gallery, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

14* In John McCabe, *Mr Laurel and Mr Hardy*, London, Museum Press, 1962, p. 100.

14† In Gablik, *loc. cit.*, p.129.

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Page

22 Magritte, in Scutenaire, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

28 Magritte, 'Les mots et les images', *La révolution surréaliste*, vol. 5, no. 12, Paris, December 15, 1929, pp. 32–3.

32 Magritte, in Gablik, *loc. cit.*, p. 128.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 130.

42 Magritte, in Scutenaire, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

52 *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. John H. Ingram, London, A. & C. Black, 1901, vol.1, pp. 309–10.

54 Magritte, in Scutenaire, *op. cit.*, pp. 82–4.

58 Scutenaire, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

66 [Paul Nougé] *Pour l'année 1928, la Maison Samuel vous présente quelques manteaux*, Brussels, Ch. Mullie, S. Samuel, [?1927], n.p.

68 Scutenaire, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

76 Magritte, '*La pensée et les images*', Palais des Beaux-Arts, Bruxelles, *op. cit.*, pp. 7–8.

84 Magritte, in Obelisk Gallery, *op. cit.*, pp. 5–8.

102 Magritte, letter to Patrick Waldberg, quoted Waldberg, *op. cit.*, p. 241.

112 Scutenaire, *op. cit.*, pp. 71–2.

116 *Ibid.*, pp. 69–70.

124 Magritte, in Gablik, *loc. cit.*, p. 129.

Le dormeur téméraire / The reckless sleeper
1927. Oil, 45⅛ x 31¼ (8)

Les objets familiers / The familiar objects
1927 or 1928. Oil, 32 x 45⅝ (13) ——

L'aimable vérité / The pleasant truth
1966. Oil, 35 x 51⅛ (100)

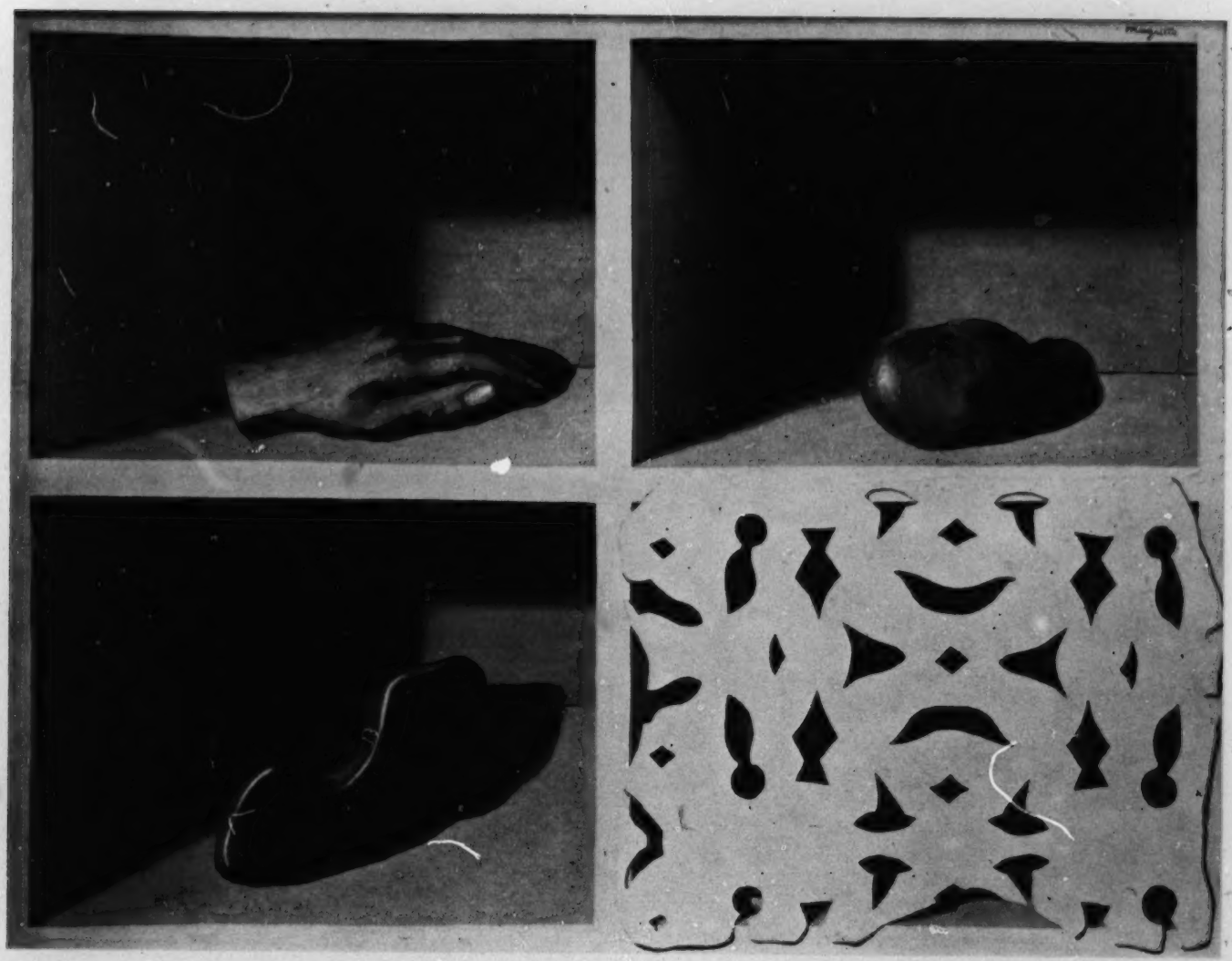
La femme introuvable / Find the woman !
1927 or 1928. Oil, 32 x 45½ (15)

Le démon de la perversité / The demon of perversity
1928. Oil, 32 x 45⅛ (18)

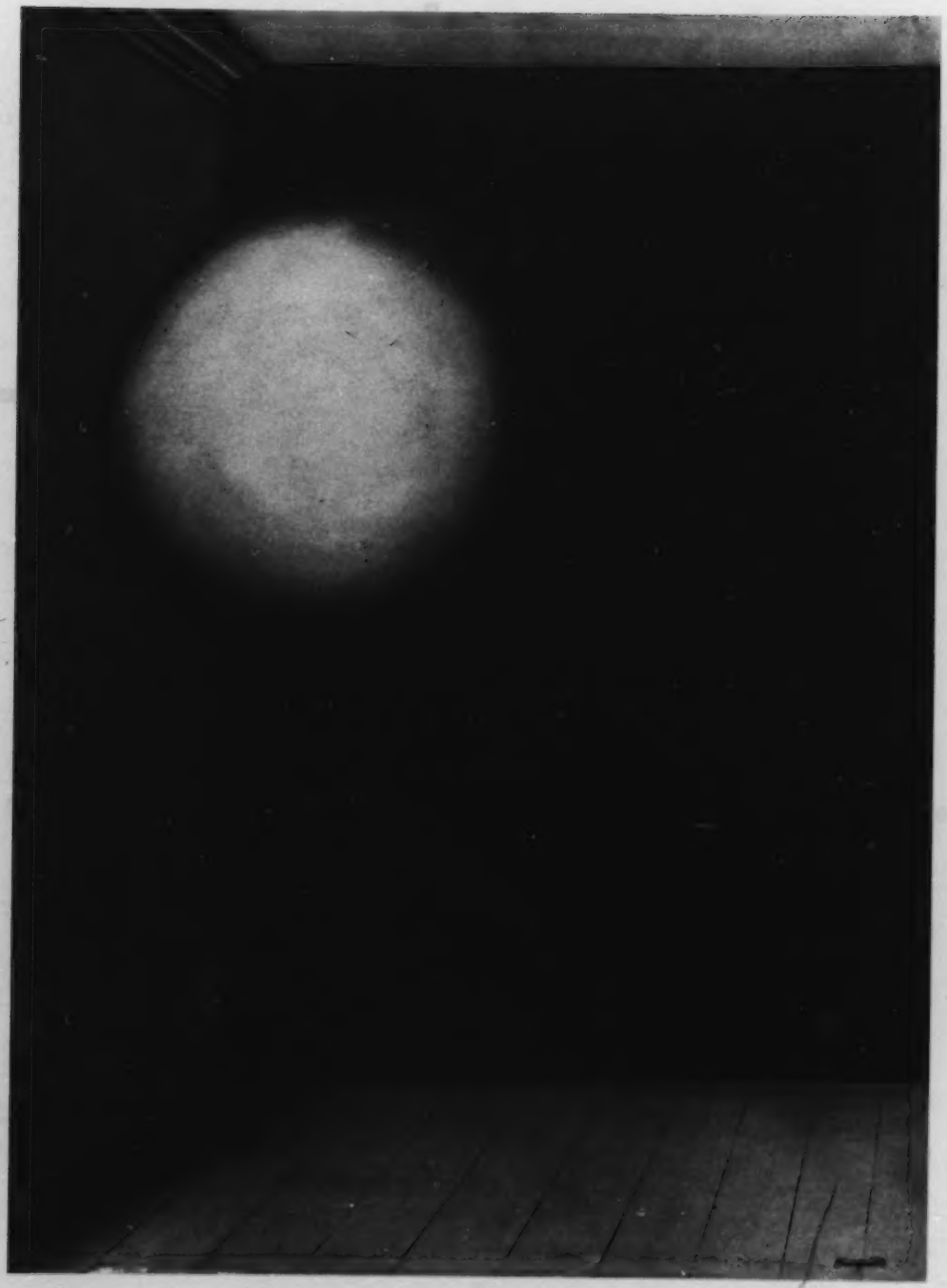
When I was a child, a little girl and I used to play in the old disused cemetery of a provincial town. We would explore the vaults whose heavy iron trap-doors we were able to lift and would climb up again into the daylight, where an artist from the city would be painting in a picturesque walk with broken stone columns scattered among the dead leaves.

It seemed to me then that the art of painting was vaguely magical and the painter endowed with superior powers.

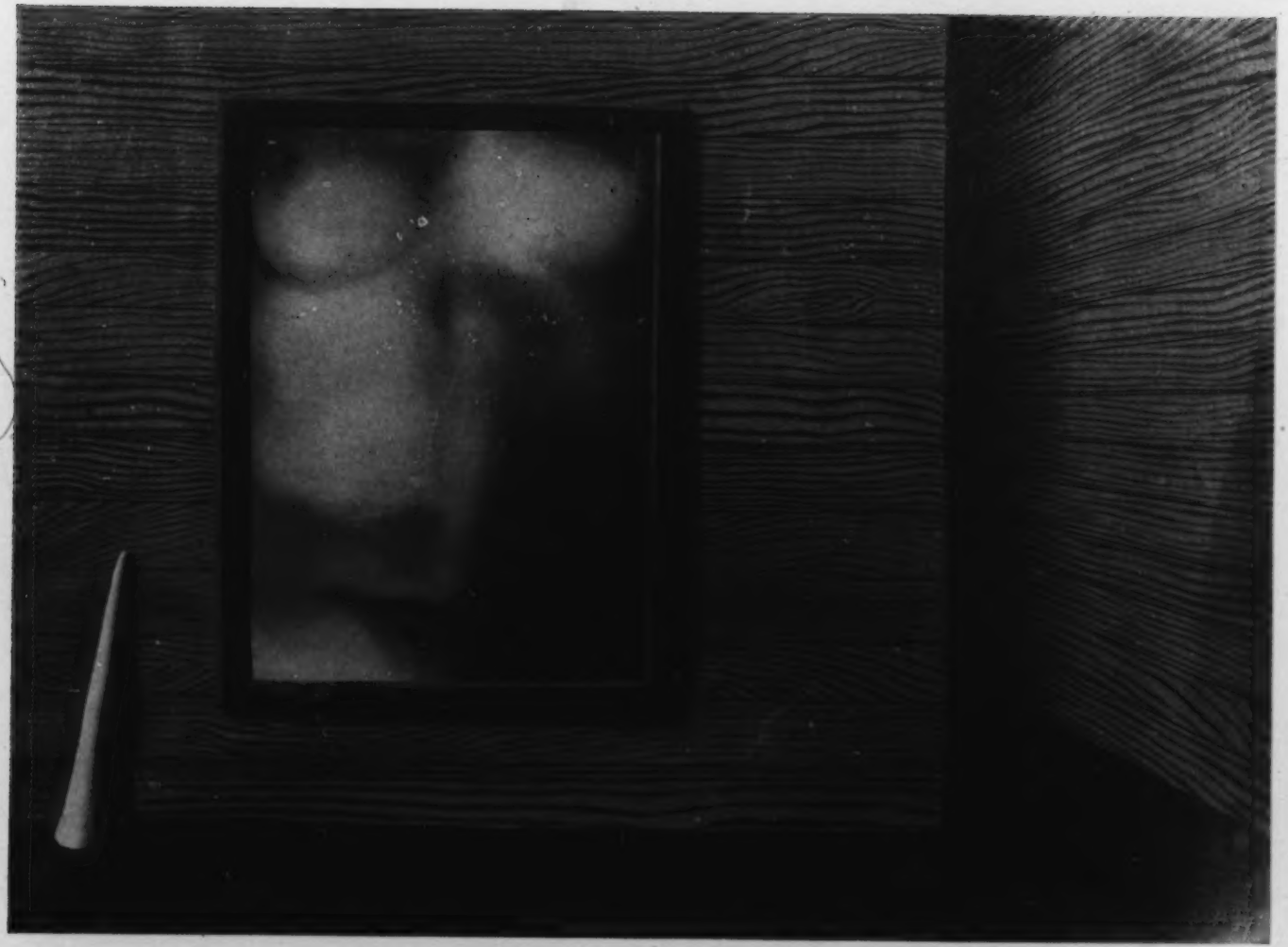
Le musée d'une nuit / Relics of a night
1927. Oil, 19⅞ x 25⅝ (12)



La vie secrète IV / The secret life IV ·
1928. Oil, 28¾ x 21¼ (25)



Le palais d'une courtisane / A courtesan's palace
1928 or 1929. Oil, 21⅛ x 28¾ (28)



La doublure du sommeil / The lining of sleep
1927 or 1928. Oil, 20 x 25⅛ (17)

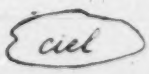
L'usage de la parole / The use of speech
1928. Oil, 21⅛ x 28¾ (26)

Words and Images

No object is so attached to its name that another cannot be found which suits it better :

There are objects that get by without a name.

Sometimes a word does no more than designate itself :

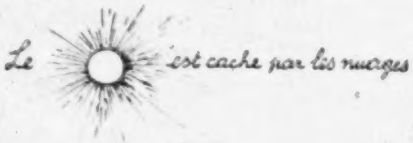


An object comes in contact with its image, an object comes in contact with its name. This object's image and name happen to come in contact with each other :

Sometimes the name of an object stands in for an image :

A word can take the place of an object in reality :

An image can take the place of a word in a proposition :

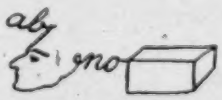


An object leads us to suppose there are others behind it :

Everything tends to suggest that there is little relation between an object and that which represents it :

The words used to designate two different objects do not show what can separate these objects from each other :

In a picture, words have the same substance as images :

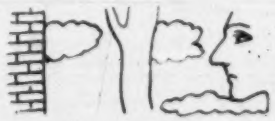


Images and words are seen differently in a picture :

A nondescript form can replace the image of an object :

An object never does the same job as its name or its image :

Now, the visible outlines of objects in reality touch as if forming a mosaic :



Indefinite shapes have as necessary and perfect a significance as precise ones :

Sometimes the names written in a picture designate precise things and the images indefinite things :

Or else the contrary :

Personnage marchant vers l'horizon / Person walking towards the horizon
1928 or 1929. Oil, 31⅞ x 45⅞ (27)

La clef des songes / The key of dreams
1936. Oil, 16¼ x 10¾ (52)

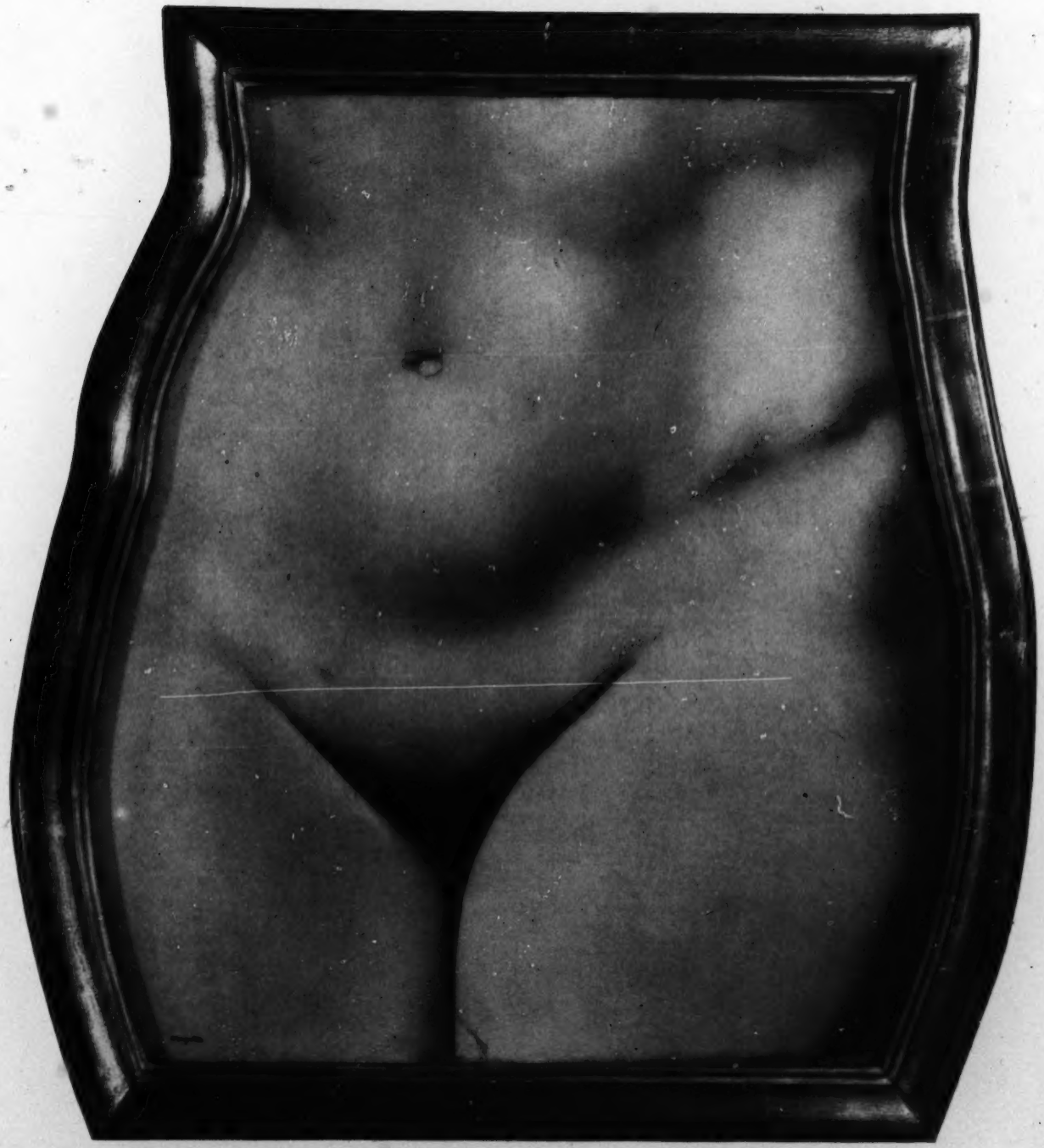
Le masque vide / The empty mask
1928. Oil, 28¼ x 36¼ (24)

It isn't necessary to think about solving problems. Where is the mind then, if it isn't at work solving problems? Impossible to know: this is precisely the problem – *how not to pose one,* in order that the mind need not apply itself to finding the solution. The mind does not understand its own reason for being, and without understanding its *raison d'être* (or why it knows what it knows), the problems it poses have no *raison d'être* either. But we know that we do not understand the *raison d'être* of the mind. It performs many functions, serves many purposes, but this is not a *raison d'être*. Thought which is alive does not become attached to many things. Only one thing interests it really, and that is the fact that it lacks any *raison d'être*. That is its mystery. That is the fact of least indifference and of most concern to it.

L'air et la chanson / The air and the song
1928 or 1929. Oil, 23¼ x 31½ (not in exhibition)

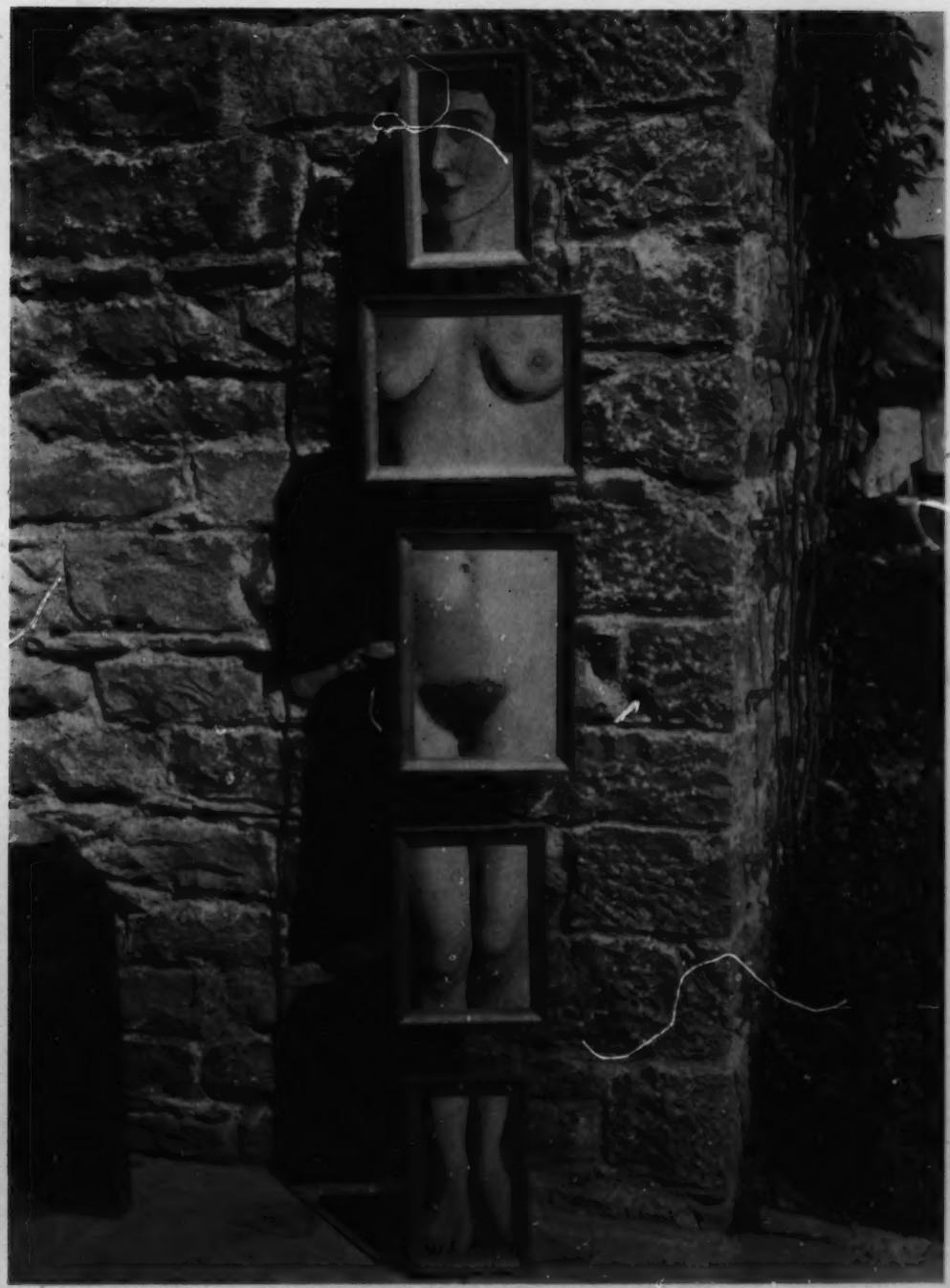
Le corps bleu / The blue body
1928. Oil, 28¾ x 21⅝ (23)

La représentation / Representation
1937. Oil, 19⅛ x 17⅜ (57)

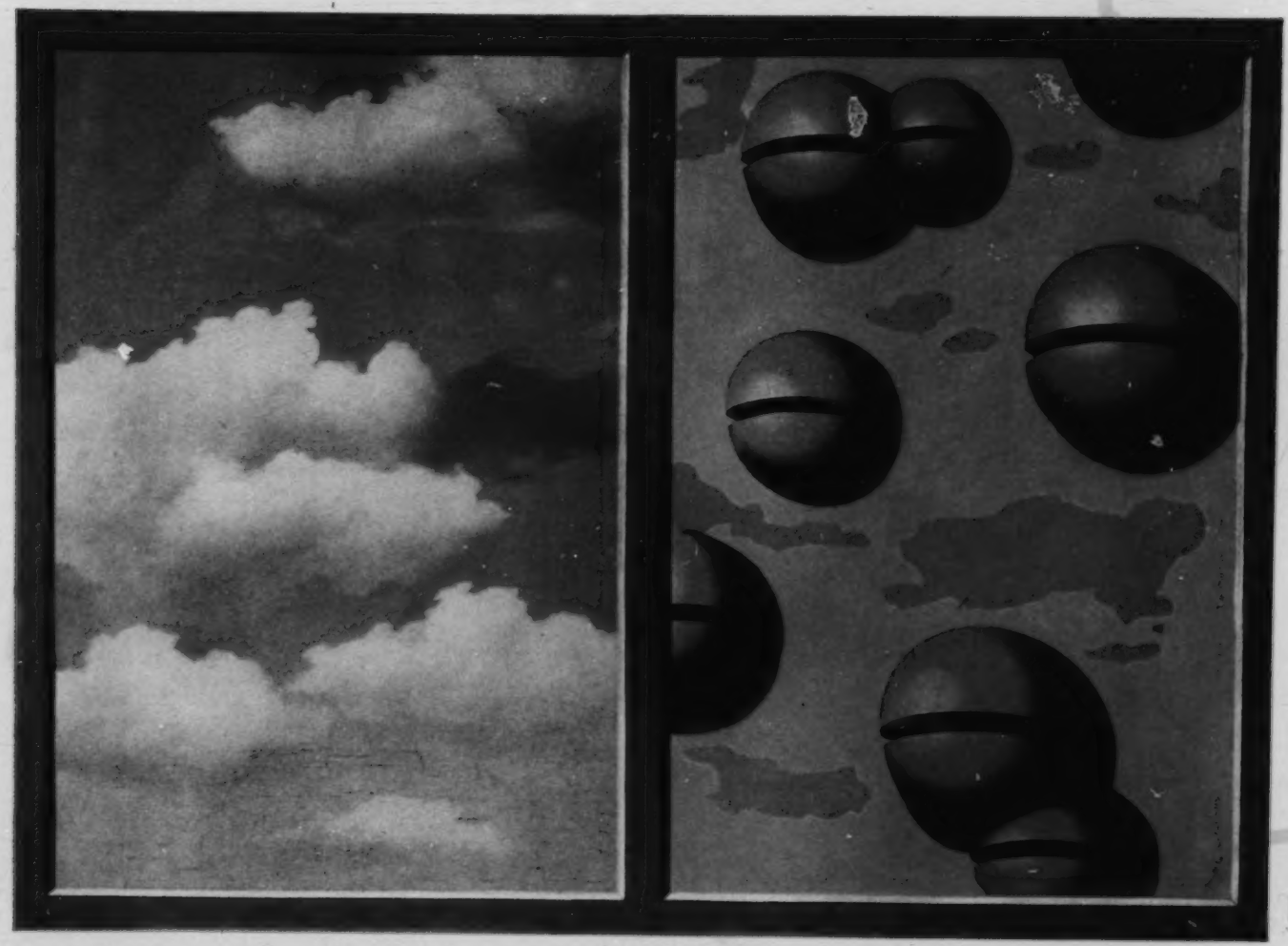


I am repatriated by a moment of panic. These are the privileged moments that transcend mediocrity. But for that there doesn't have to be art – it can happen at any moment.

L'évidence éternelle / The eternal evidence
1930. Oil, 8¼ x 4¾; 7⅞ x 9½; 10¾ x 7⅞; 8¾ x 6⅜; 8¾ x 4¾ (not in exhibition)



Grelots roses, ciels en lambeaux / Pink bells, tattered skies
1929 or 1930. Oil, 33⅜ x 44¼ (31)



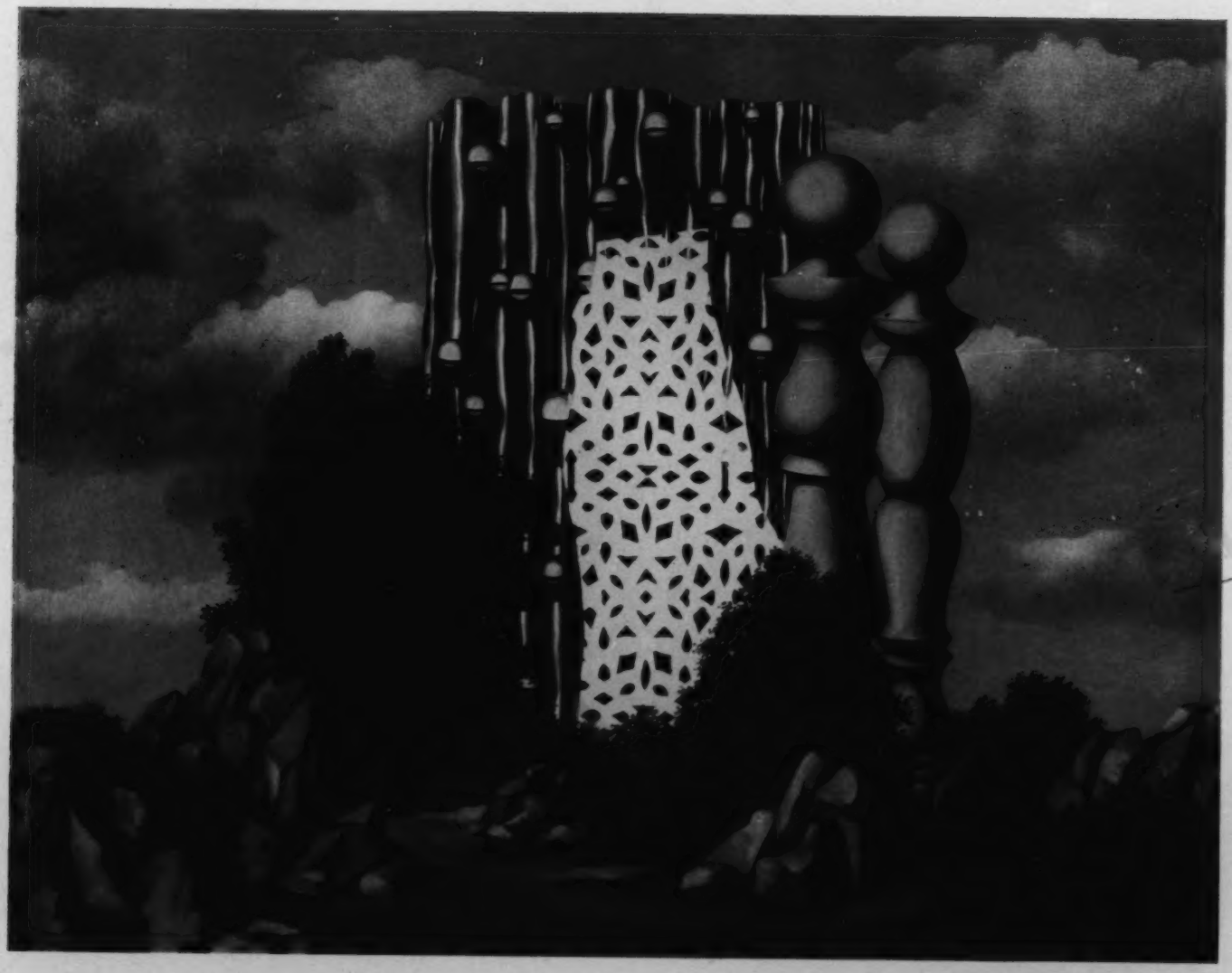
La fin des contemplations / The end of contemplation
1927. Oil, with stud fasteners, 28¾ x 39⅜ (11)

Le masque vide / The empty mask
1928 or 1929. Oil, 32 x 45¾ (29)

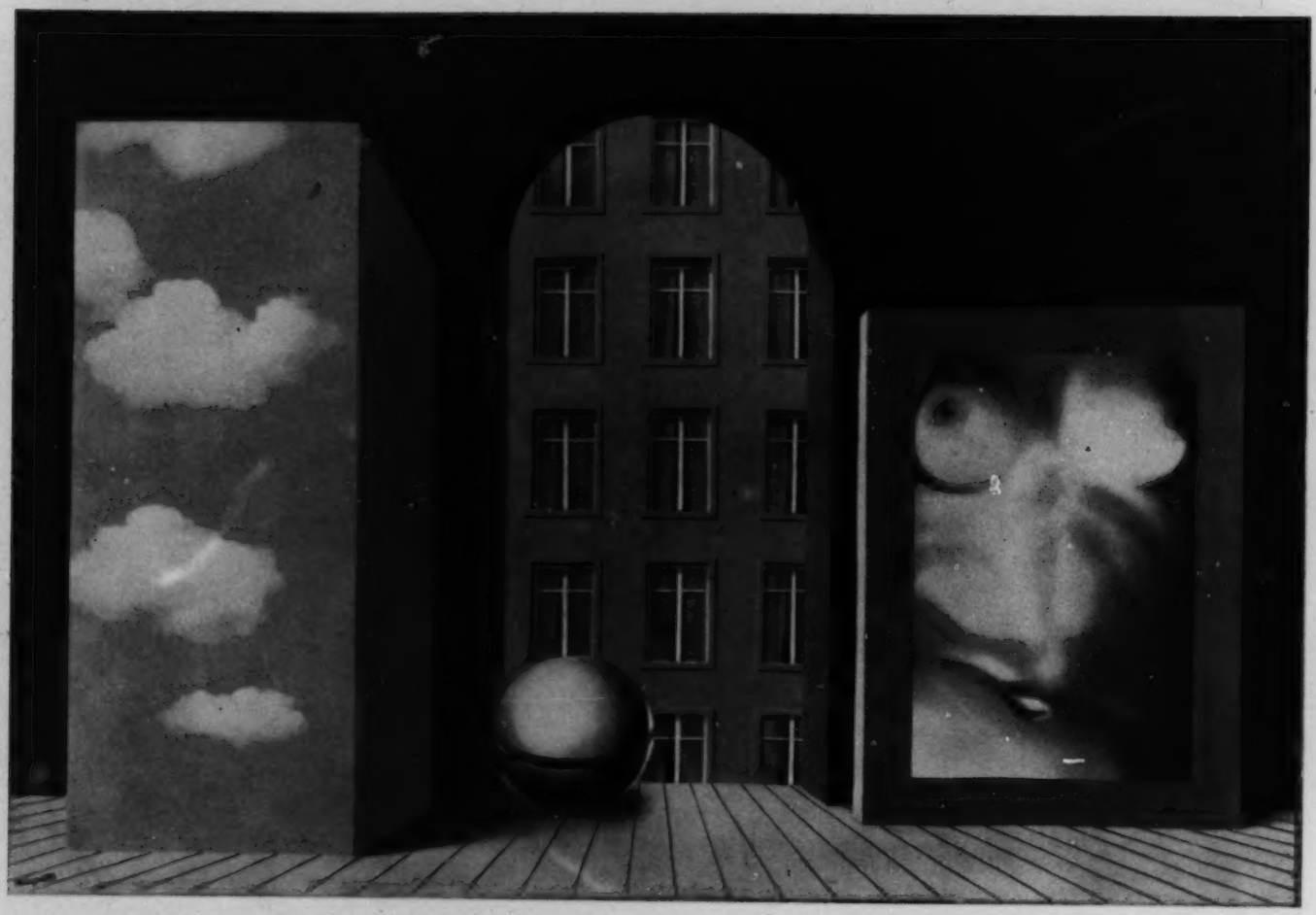
Au seuil de la liberté / On the threshold of liberty
1930. Oil, 45 3/8 x 57 7/8 (32)

[On Chirico] The spectator regains his solitude and hears the silence of the world.

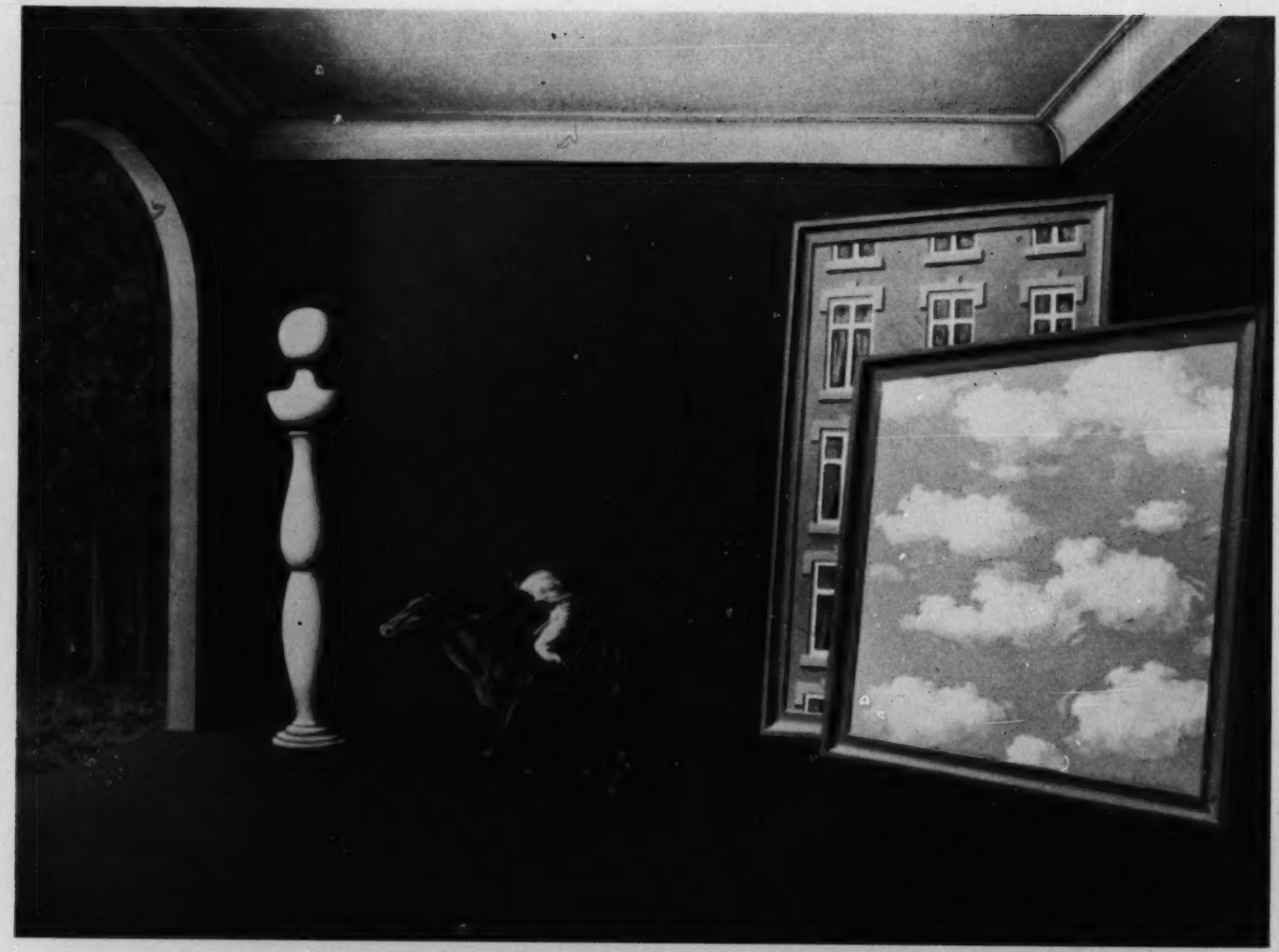
L'annonciation / The annunciation
1930. Oil, 45 x 57¾ (33)



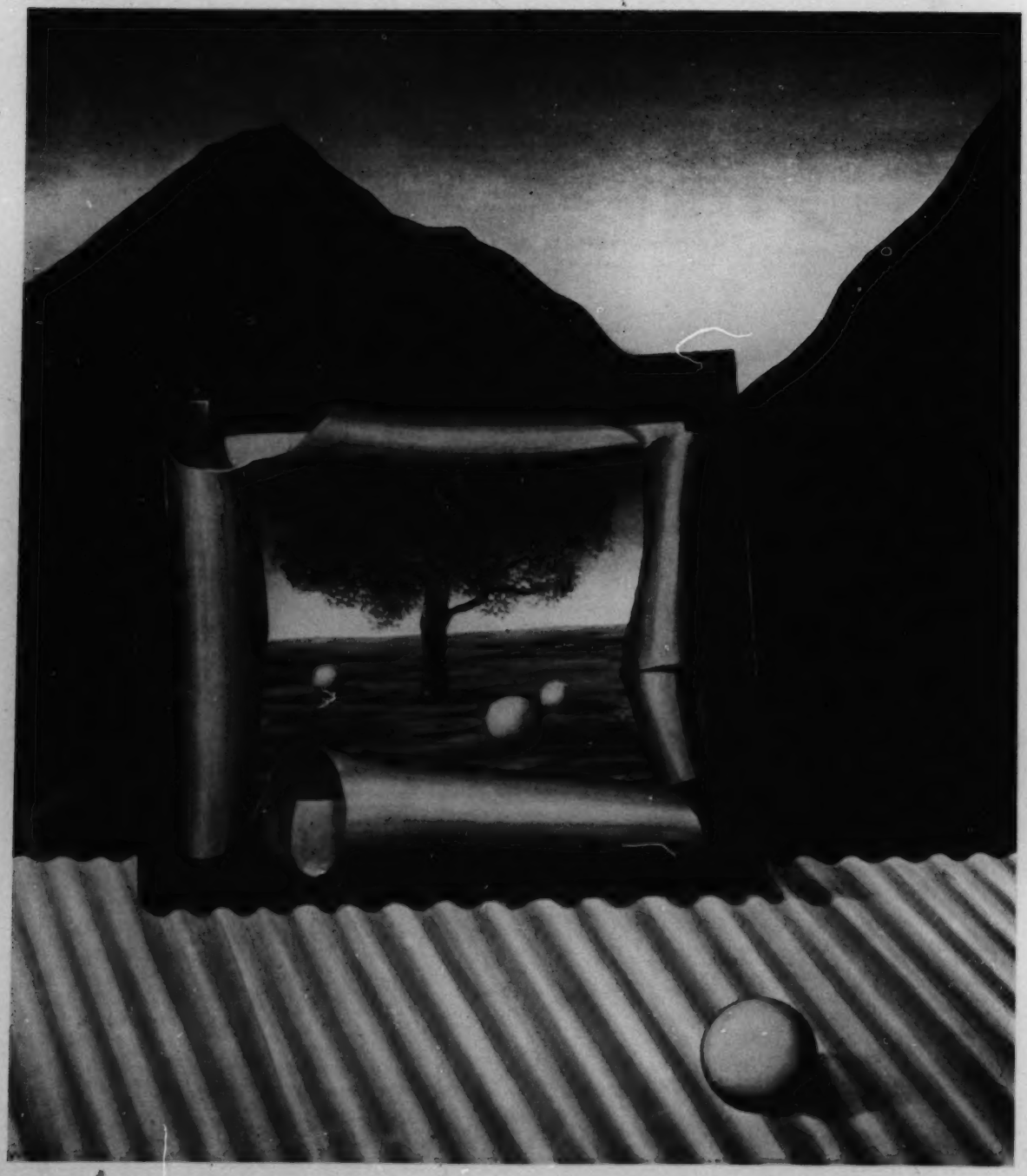
L'attentat / Act of violence
*c.*1932. Oil, 27½ x 39⅜ (39)



L'enfance d'Icare / The childhood of Icarus
1960. Oil, 38 x 51 (91)

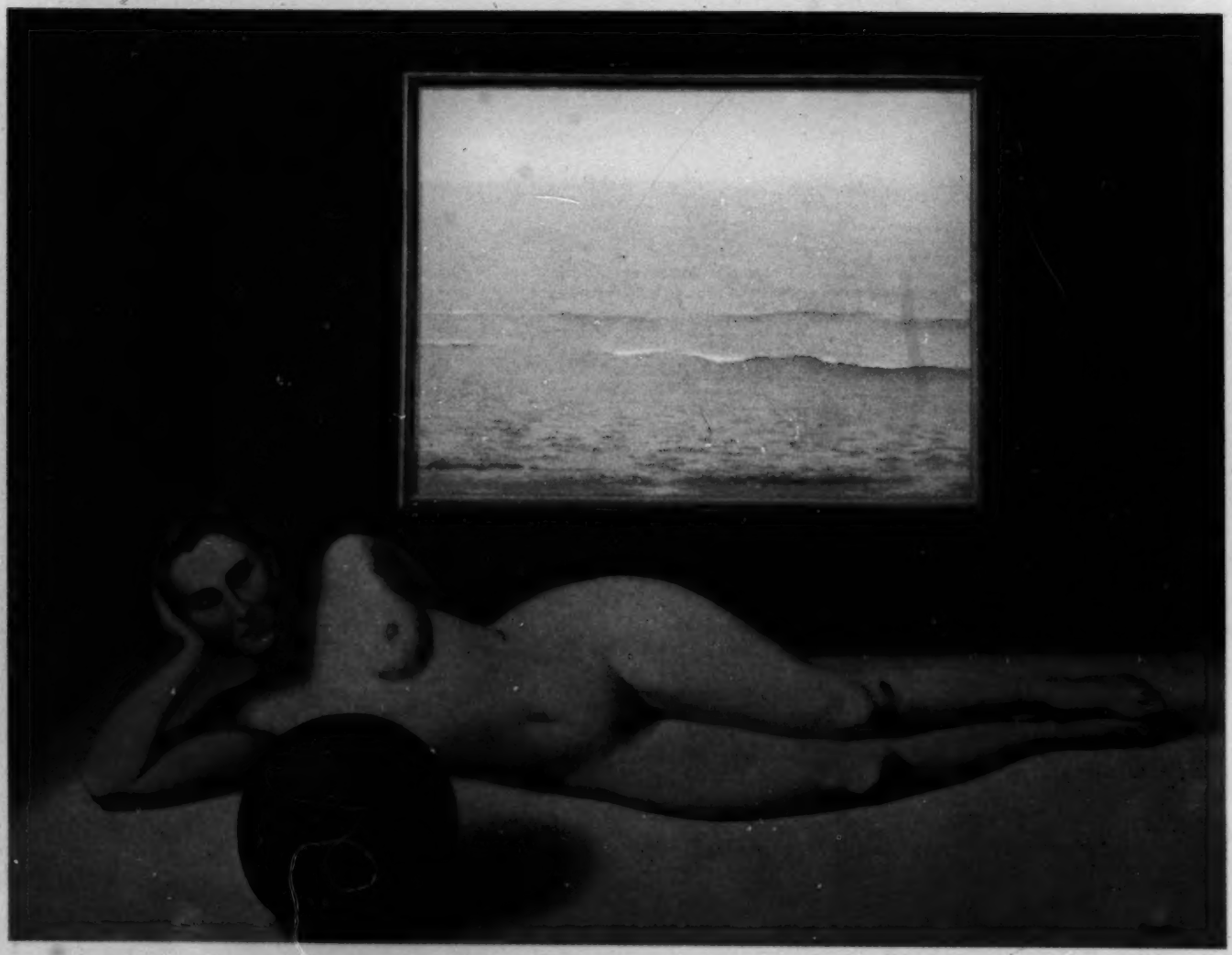


Les signes du soir / Signs of evening
1926. Oil, 29⅛ x 25½ (1)

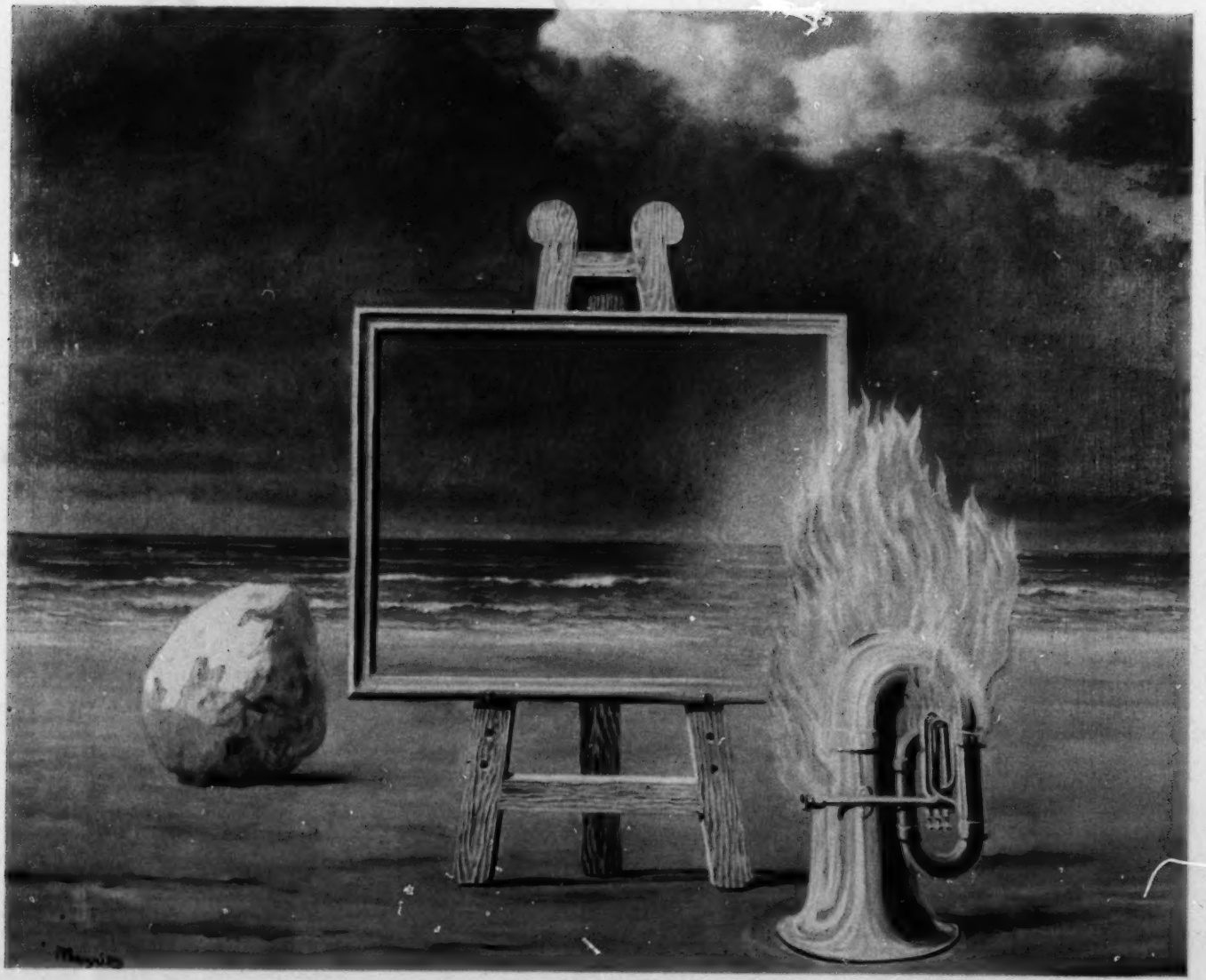


La révolution / The revolution
1934. Oil, 25⅞ x 19⅝ (43)

La baigneuse du clair au sombre / Bather between light and darkness
1935 or 1936. Oil, 35 x 45⅛ (51)



La belle captive / The fair captive
1947. Oil, 21⅛ x 26¼ (65)



Les promenades d'Euclide / Euclidean walks
1955. Oil, 64 x 51¼ (82)

La condition humaine I / The human condition I
1933. Oil, 39½ x 32 (42)

I repeat that in landscape arrangements alone is the physical nature susceptible of exaltation, and that therefore her susceptibility of improvement at this one point was a mystery I had been unable to solve. My own thoughts on the subject had rested in the idea that the primitive intention of nature would have so arranged the earth's surface as to have fulfilled at all points man's sense of perfection in the beautiful, the sublime, or the picturesque; but that this primitive intention had been frustrated by the known geological disturbances – disturbances of form and colour-grouping, in the correction or allaying of which lies the soul of art. The force of this idea was much weakened, however, by the necessity which it involved of considering the disturbances abnormal and unadapted to any purpose. It was Ellison who suggested that they were prognostic of *death*. He thus explained :– 'Admit the earthly immortality of man to have been the first intention. We have then the primitive arrangement of the earth's surface adapted to his blissful estate, as not existent but designed. The disturbances were the preparations for his subsequently conceived deathful condition.

'Now,' said my friend, 'what we regard as exaltation of the landscape may be really such, as respects only the moral or human *point of view*. Each alternation of the natural scenery may possibly effect a blemish in the picture, if we can suppose this picture viewed at large – in mass – from some point distant from the earth's surface, although not beyond the limits of its atmosphere. It is easily understood that what might improve a closely scrutinised detail, may at the same time injure a general or more distantly observed effect. There *may* be a class of beings, human once, but now invisible to humanity, to whom, from afar, our disorder may seem order – our unpicturesqueness picturesque; in a word, the earth-angels, for whose scrutiny more especially than our own, and for whose death-refined appreciation of the beautiful, may have been set in array by God the wide landscape-gardens of the hemispheres.'

Poe : *The Domain of Arnheim*

Le domaine d'Arnheim / The domain of Arnheim
1949. Oil, 39⅜ x 32 (68)

One night in 1936, sharing a room with a bird asleep in a cage, I woke up and, by some glorious delusion, saw, instead of a bird, an egg inside the cage. I was on to an amazing new poetic secret, for the shock which I felt was induced precisely by the affinity between two objects, the cage and the egg, whereas previously I would induce this shock by bringing together objects that were totally unrelated. .

From the moment of this revelation, I tried to find out if objects other than the cage could not equally well, through the disclosure of some element typical of them and strictly predestined, evince the same manifest poetry as the conjunction of the egg and the cage had succeeded in producing.

In the course of my investigations I became convinced that this element to be discovered, this one thing among all those attached somehow to each object, was invariably something I already knew, but that this knowledge was as if lost in the depths of my mind.

As these investigations could give only one correct answer for each object, they were like the pursuit of a solution to a problem with three data: the object, the thing connected with it in the shadows of my consciousness, and the light into which this thing had to emerge.

The problem of the door called forth an opening which one could pass through. In *La réponse imprévue* I showed a closed door in a room. A mis-shapen hole in the door reveals night. . .

The problem of the window led to *La condition humaine*. In front of a window seen from inside a room I placed a picture representing exactly that part of the landscape which was masked by the picture. In this way the tree represented in this picture hid the tree standing behind it, outside the room. For the spectator the tree was at one and the same time in the room – in the picture – and, by inference, outside the room – in the real landscape. This is how we see the world: we see it outside ourselves and yet we have only a representation of it within us. In the same way, we sometimes situate in the past a thing which is happening in the present. So time and space are freed from the crude meaning which is the only one allowed to them in everyday experience.

As for the locomotive, I made it loom out of a dining-room fireplace in place of the usual stove-pipe. This metamorphosis is called *La durée poignardée*. . .

L'invention collective is the answer to the problem of the sea: lying on the beach is a mermaid whose top half is that of a fish and bottom half the belly and legs of a woman. . .

Le domaine d'Arnheim is the realization of a vision that would have much pleased Edgar Allan Poe: an immense mountain shaped exactly like an eagle with wings spread. It is seen through an opening with a ledge on which there are two eggs. . .

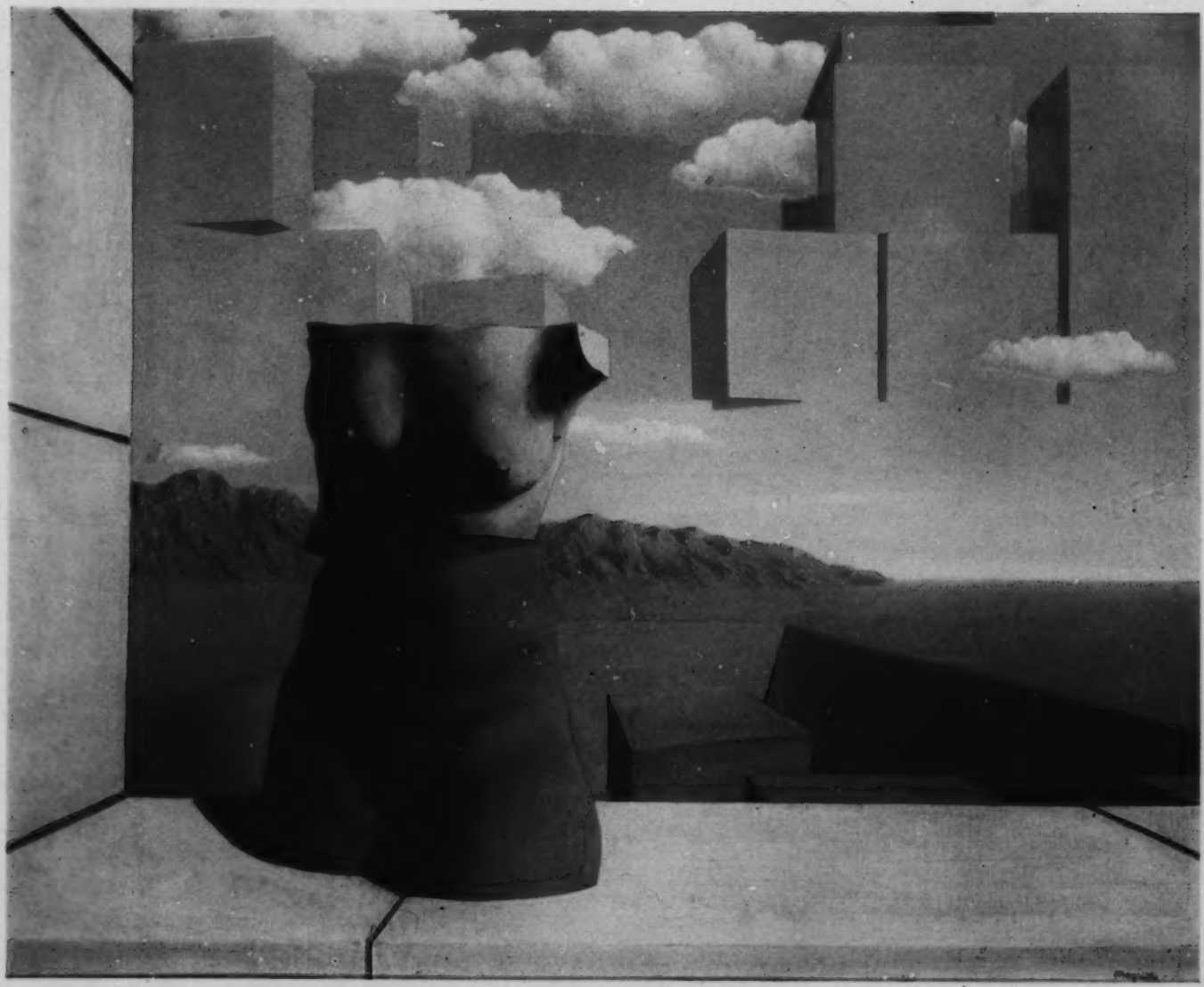
Woman gave rise to *Le viol*. This is a woman's face made up of her body. The breasts are eyes, the nose is a navel and her sex replaces the mouth.

The problem of shoes demonstrates how the most barbarous things can appear perfectly decent through force of habit. Thanks to *Le modèle rouge*, the conjunction of a human foot and a leather shoe can in fact be traced back to a monstrous practice.

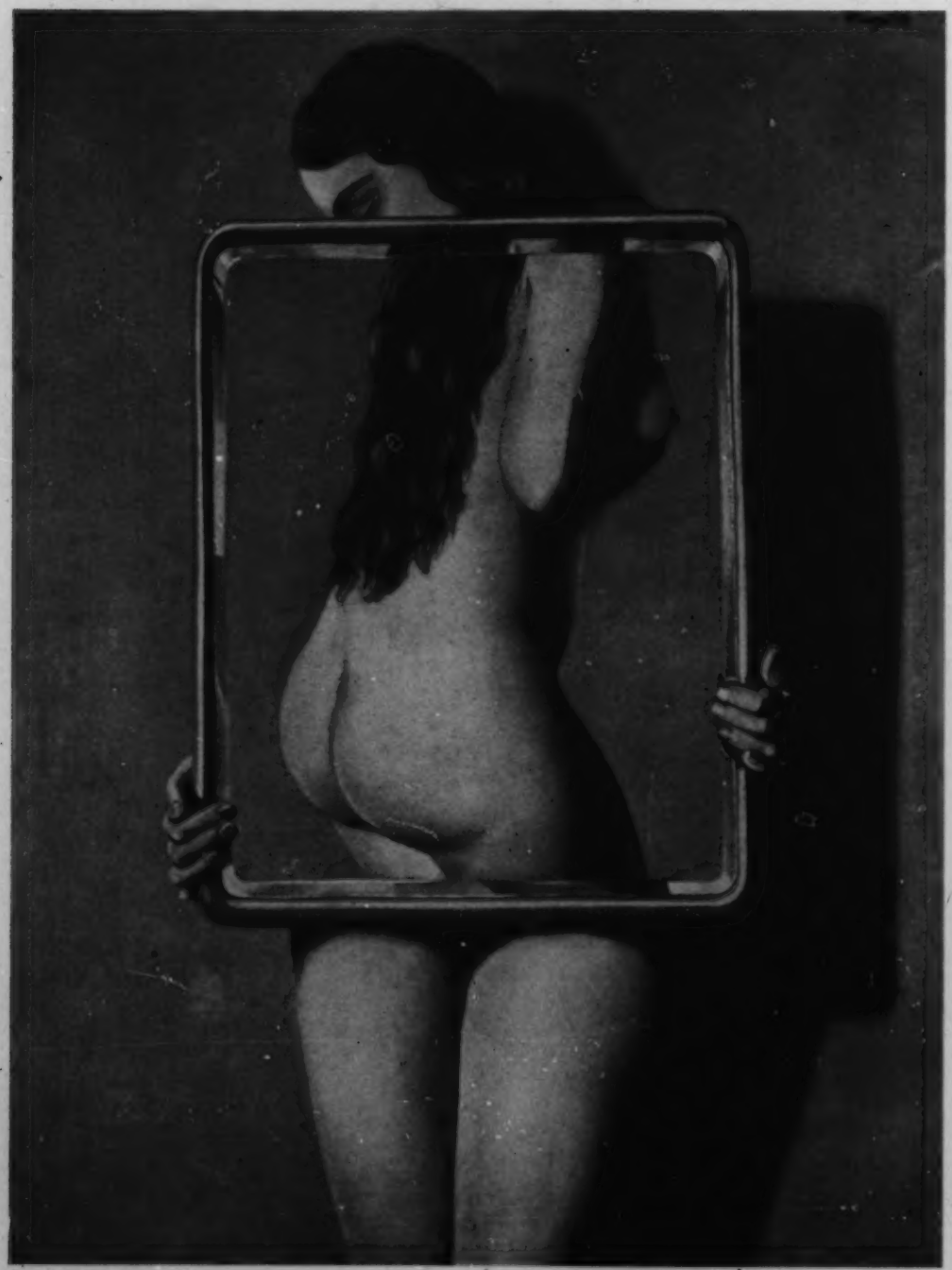
In *Le printemps éternel* a female dancer replaces the penis of a Herculean figure reclining by the sea.

The problem of rain called into being great clouds creeping over the ground in a vista of the countryside in the rain. *La sélection naturelle*, *L'union libre* and *Le chant de l'orage* are three realizations of this.

Les marches de l'été / The march of summer
1938. Oil, 23¾ x 29 (60)



Les liaisons dangereuses / Dangerous acquaintances
1934 or 1935. Oil, 28⅞ x 21¼ (45)



Les idées de l'acrobate / Acrobatic ideas
1927 or 1928. Oil, 45⅜ x 31⅞ (16)

Magritte is mad about music: he likes Brahms, Bach, Ravel, Lalo, Duparc, Churchill, Sibelius, Fauré, Debussy, Satie, Chopin, Smetana and a hundred others.

The authors he reads are Rex Stout, Bret Harte, Dashiell Hammett, Baudelaire, Raoul Whitfield, Noyes Hart, Edgar Allan Poe, Freeman Wills Crofts in his better moments and Pierre Rousseau. The book he remembers enjoying most is *Treasure Island*.

The films that have appealed to him most are Fritz Lang's *The Spy* and Dreyer's *Vampire*. His favourite actor is Sinoël.

His tastes in art? He hasn't any.

Scutenaire

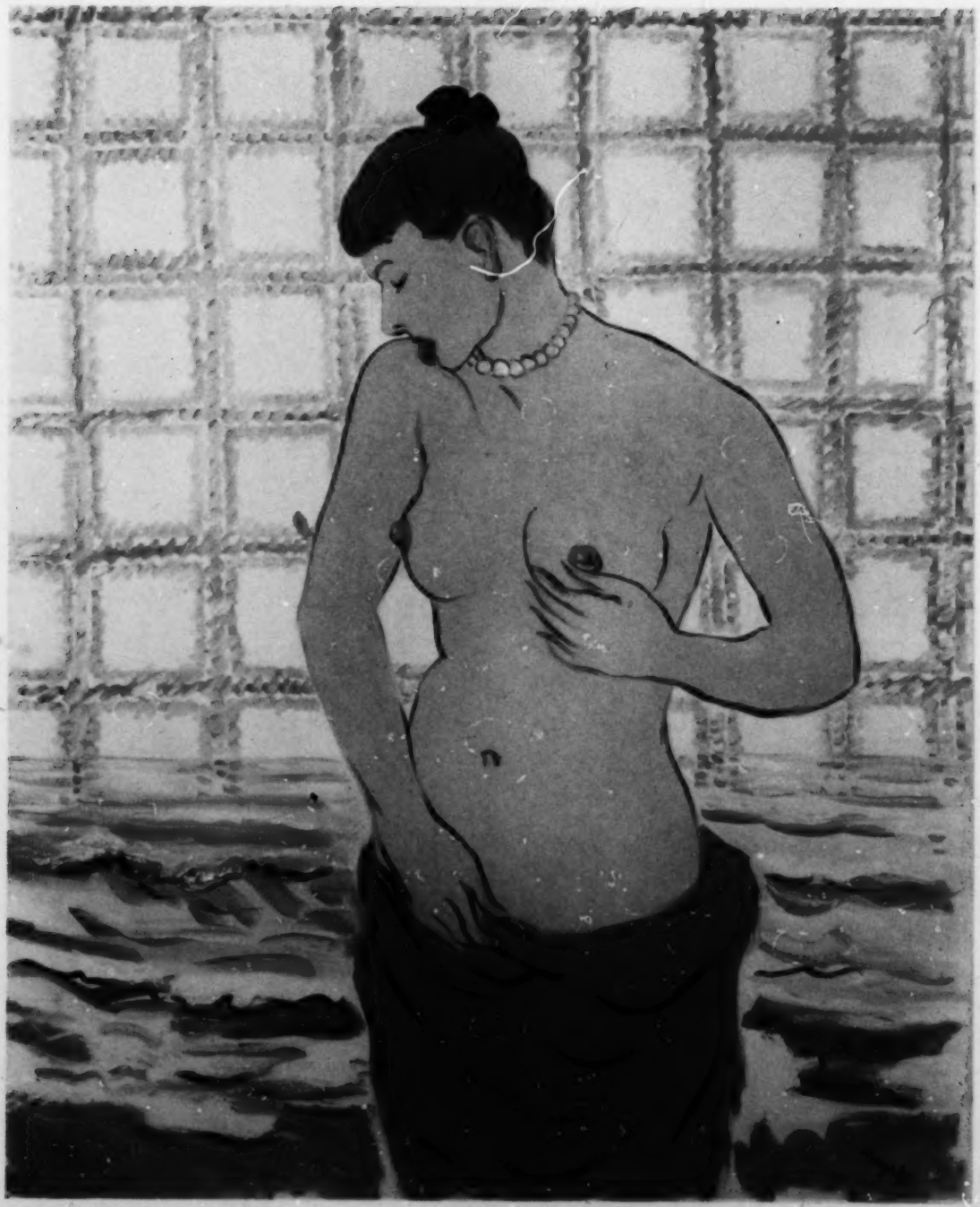
Entracte / Intermission
1927 or 1928. Oil, 45 x 63⅜ (14)

Les chasseurs au bord de la nuit / The hunters at the edge of night
1928. Oil, 31⅞ x 45⅛ (not in exhibition)

Les jours gigantesques / The titanic days
1928. Oil, 45½ x 31⅞ (20)

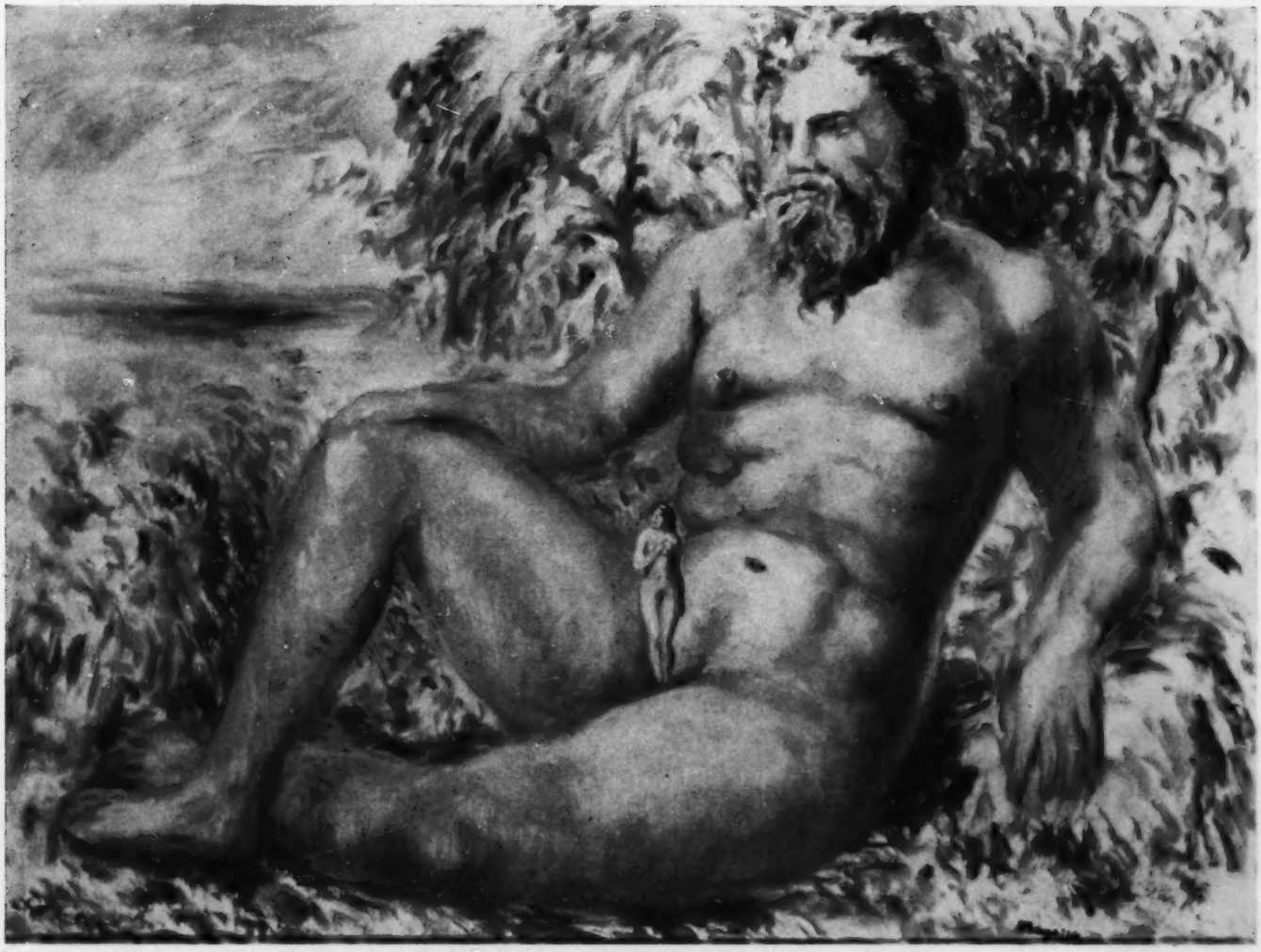
Paysage / Landscape
1926. Oil, 39½ x 28⅞ (3)

Le galet / The pebble
1948. Oil, 39½ x 31⅞ (67)



La moisson / The harvest
1943. Oil, 23¼ x 31½ (64)

L'océan / The ocean
1943. Oil, 19¾ x 25⅝ (not in exhibition)



What we guess may be what she is thinking. Dressed as she is, she needs no explanation.

Neither her eyes nor her hands but the folds of her cloak conceal her secrets and yours.

She can safely invent the world. Her dreams protect her like a cloak.

When it's spread out, the horizon changes, with you, enchantress of the landscape, at its centre, alone.

Unsigned captions by Paul Nougé
to unsigned illustrations by Magritte
in a furrier's catalogue

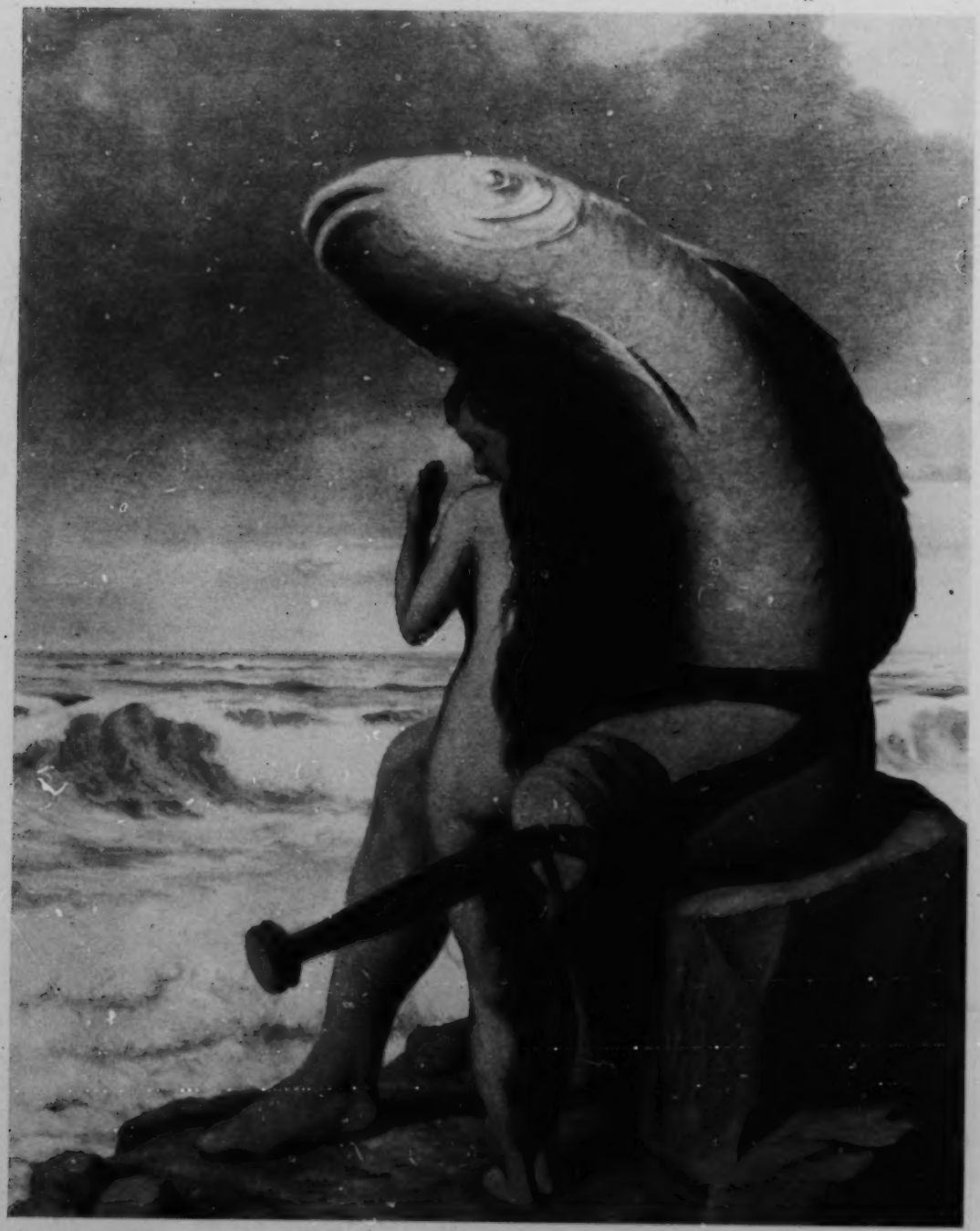
Le viol / The rape
1934. Oil, 28½ x 21 (44)

He spends recklessly but ritualistically, as though the value he attaches to money were one of quality rather than quantity.

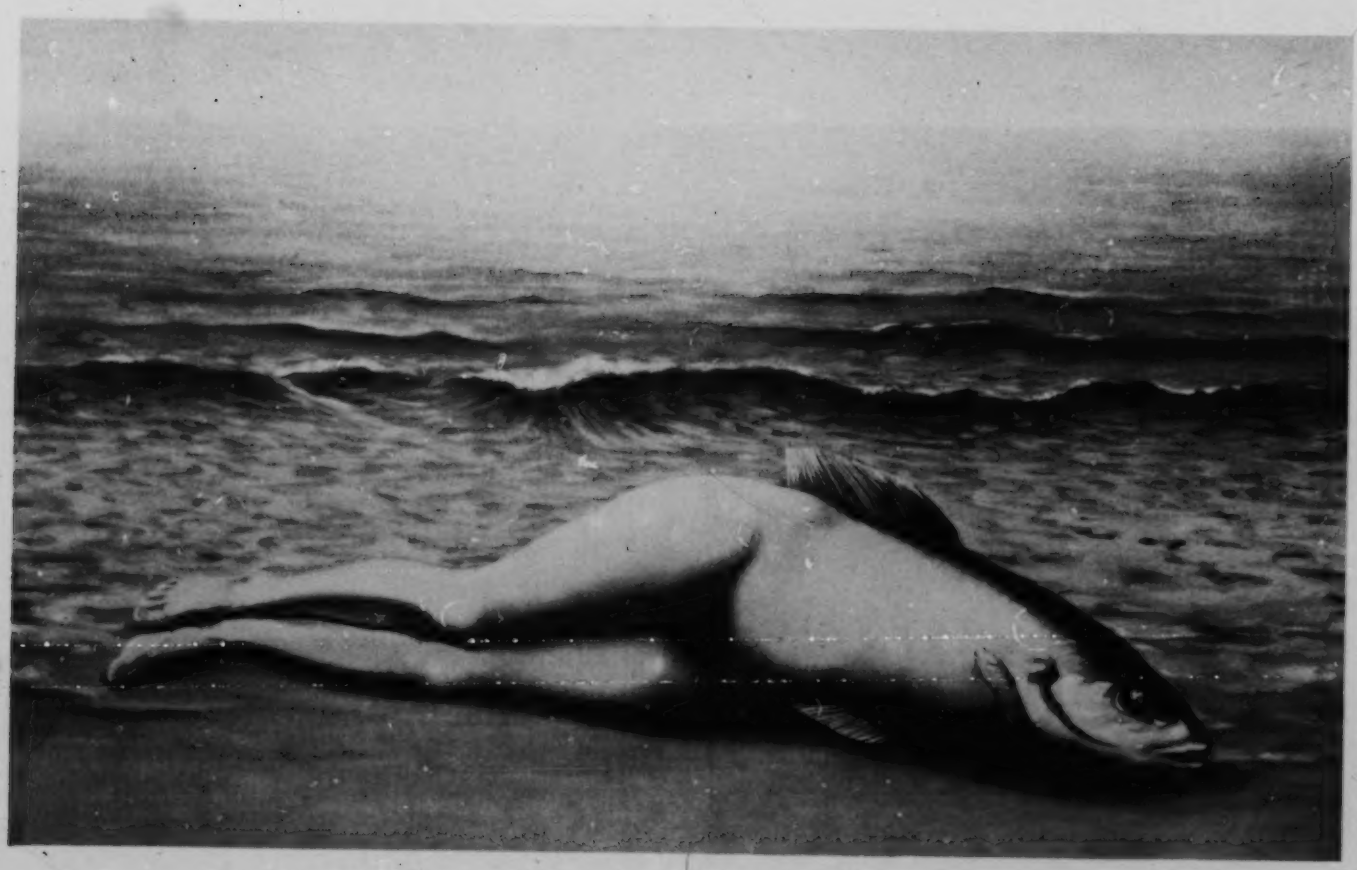
Scutenaire

La lampe philosophique / The philosopher's lamp
1936. Oil, 18⅛ x 21⅝ (50)

Le vieux canonnier / The old gunner.
1947. Oil (not in exhibition)



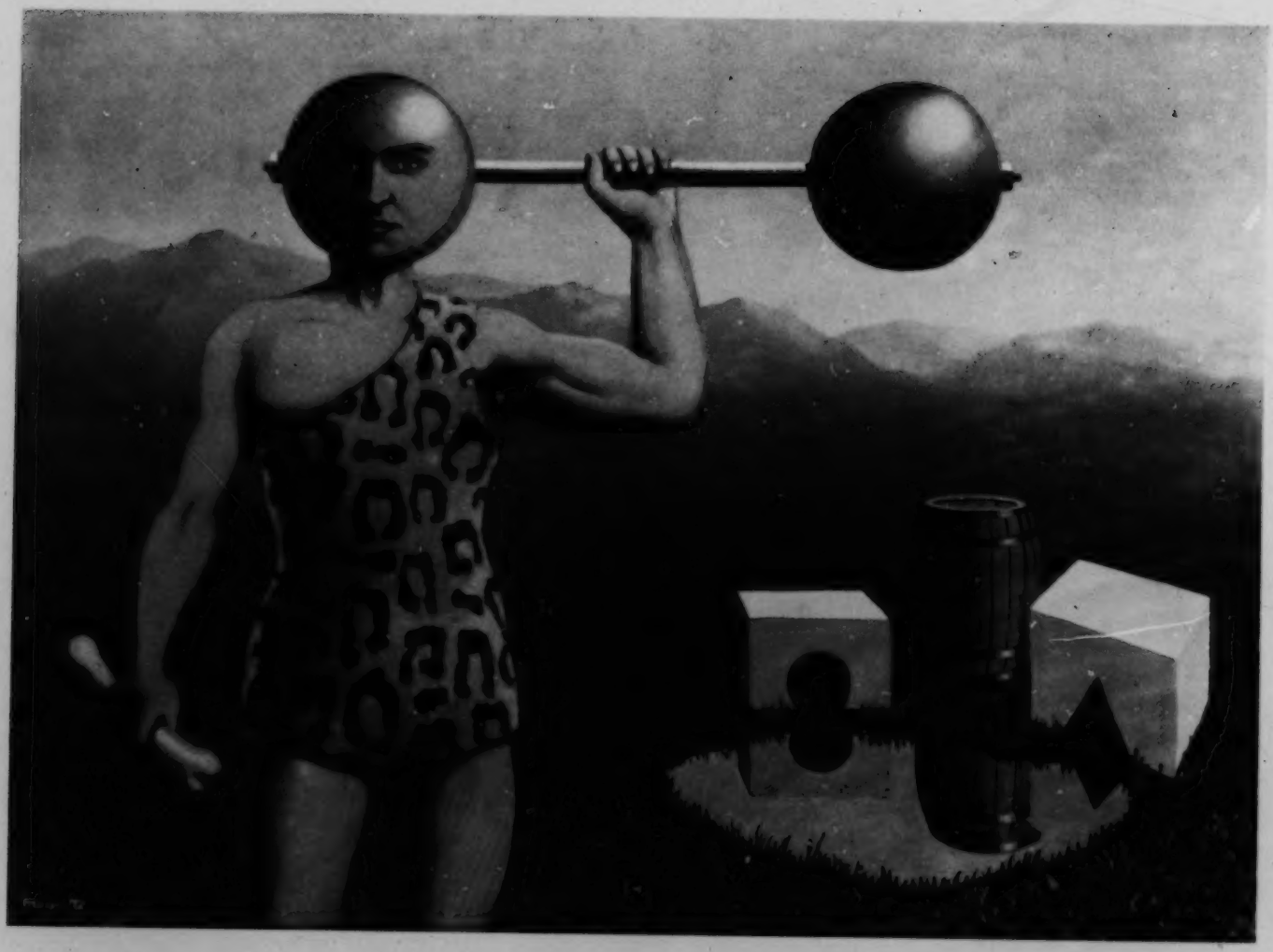
L'invention collective / Collective invention
1935. Oil, 28¾ x 45⅝ (47)



Perspective: Madame Récamier de David / Perspective : Madame Récamier by David
1950. Oil, 23¾ x 31½ (70)

Cosmogonie élémentaire / Elementary cosmogony
1949. Oil, 31⅞ x 39⅜ (69)

Le mouvement perpétuel / Perpetual motion
1935. Oil, 21¼ x 28¾ (46)



Le thérapeute / The therapeutist
1937. Oil, 36¼ x 25½ (58)

Thought is essentially free. It is Light. Nevertheless, in both the ordinary and the extraordinary moments of life, our thought does not manifest its freedom to its fullest extent. It is unceasingly threatened or involved by what happens to us. It *coincides* with a thousand and one things which restrict it. This coincidence is *almost* permanent.

Thought has some freedom when, for instance, it gives value to the feeling one has for a stone, or when it bestows the highest value on life and the universe on which life depends. We have to admire that great art-lover Ruskin when he said that all works of art should perish rather than the birds that sing in the trees.

Life, the Universe, the Void have no value for thought when it is truly free. The only thing that has value for it is Meaning, that is, the moral concept of the Impossible. To think Meaning the mind has to free itself from ordinary, nearly ordinary or extraordinary ideas.

In the field of the arts, thought is generally deprived of all freedom through respect for dead traditions or subservience to ridiculous fashions.

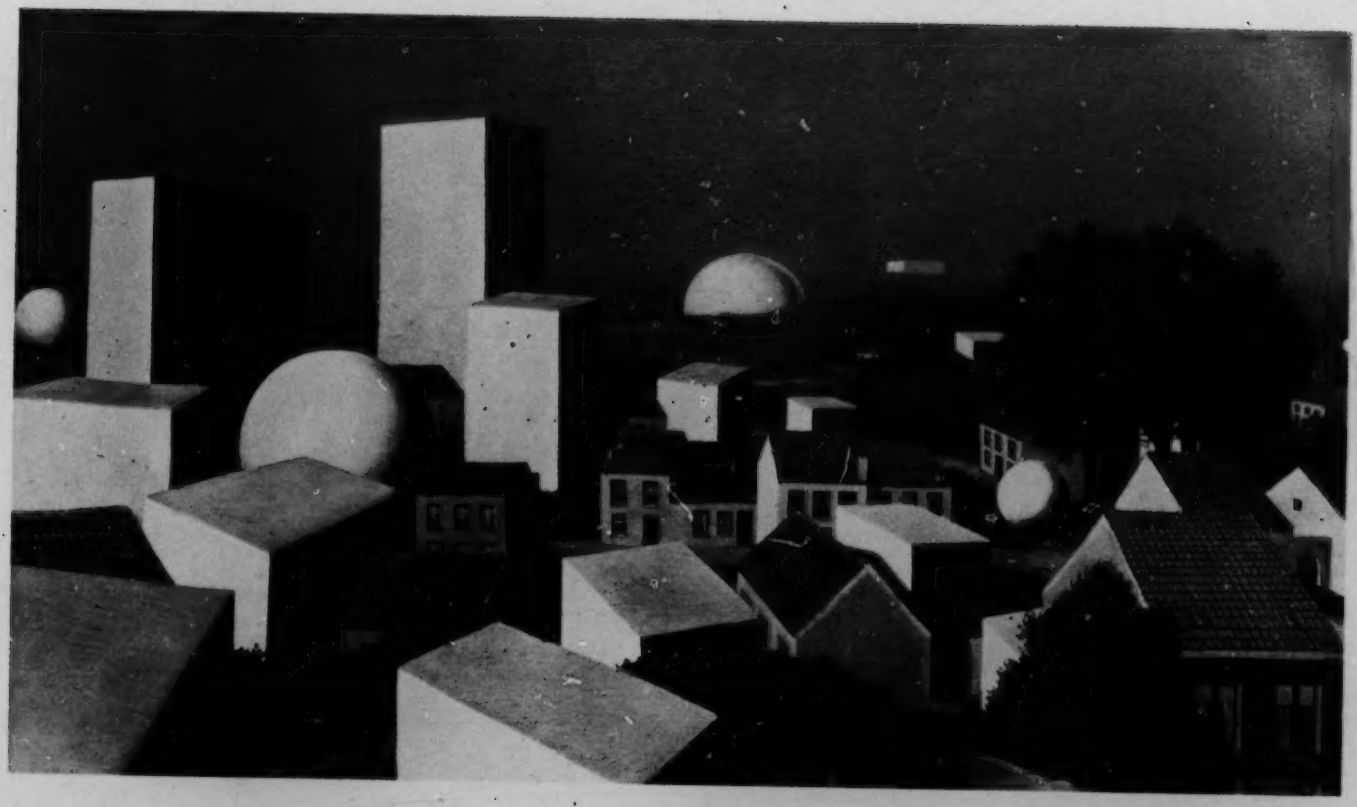
The absurdity and malice of the world demand that the generous heart rebel and the mind attend to justice.

My pictures are images. No valid description of an image can be given unless thought is directed where it can travel freely. It is also necessary to give careful attention both to the image and at the same time to the words chosen to describe it. The description of the painted image become a mental image, must be *endlessly perfectible*. Moreover, it is important to be wary of the inopportune use of certain words (abstract, concrete, consciousness, unconsciousness, imaginary, real, mystification, sincerity, reason, madness, palette, literature, temperament, ideal, etc.)

I consider any verbal attempt valid which consists in saying that my pictures have been conceived as material signs of the freedom of thought. 'As far as is humanly possible', they aim at not downgrading Meaning, that is, the Impossible.

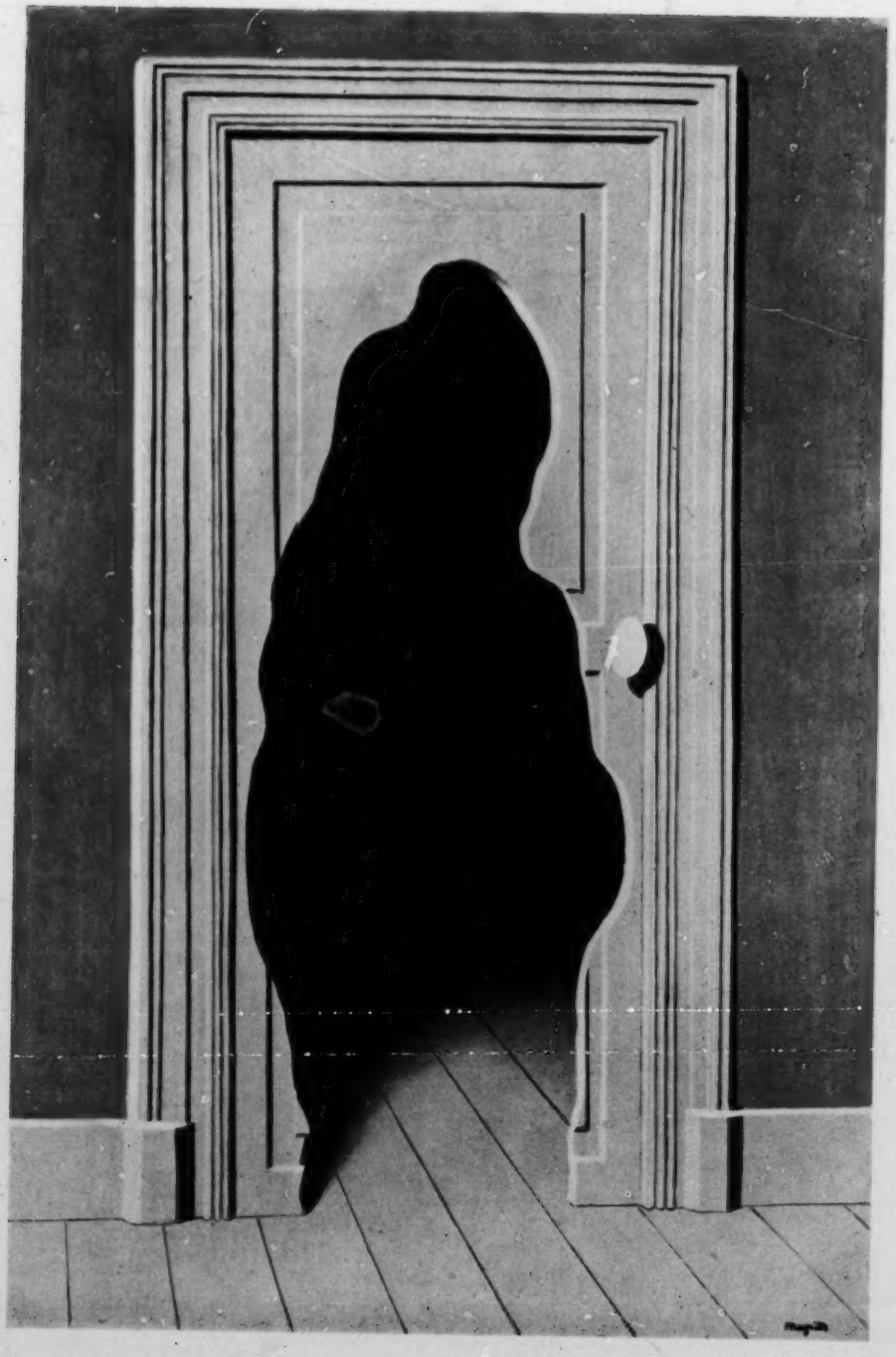
If the question 'What is the "meaning" of these images?' could be answered, it would be tantamount to making Meaning, the Impossible, resemble a possibility. To try and answer it would be to allow that it had a 'meaning'. The spectator can, with the greatest possible freedom, see my images *as they are*, while trying like their author to think of Meaning, which is to say, of the Impossible.

Le calcul mental / Mental arithmetic
1931. Oil, 25¾ x 45⅛ (35)

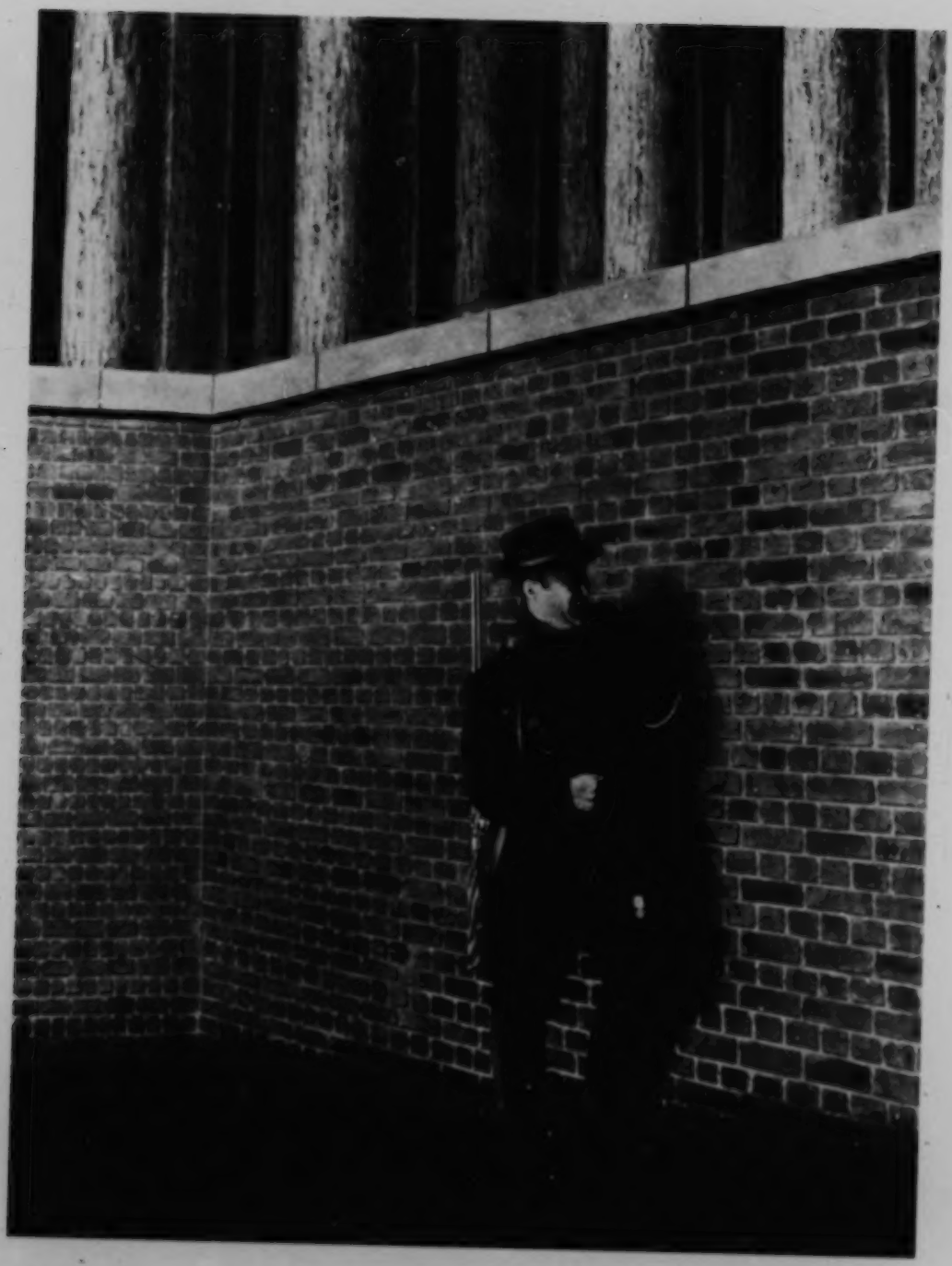


L'homme du large / The man of the sea
1926. Oil, 55 x 41 ⅜ (5)

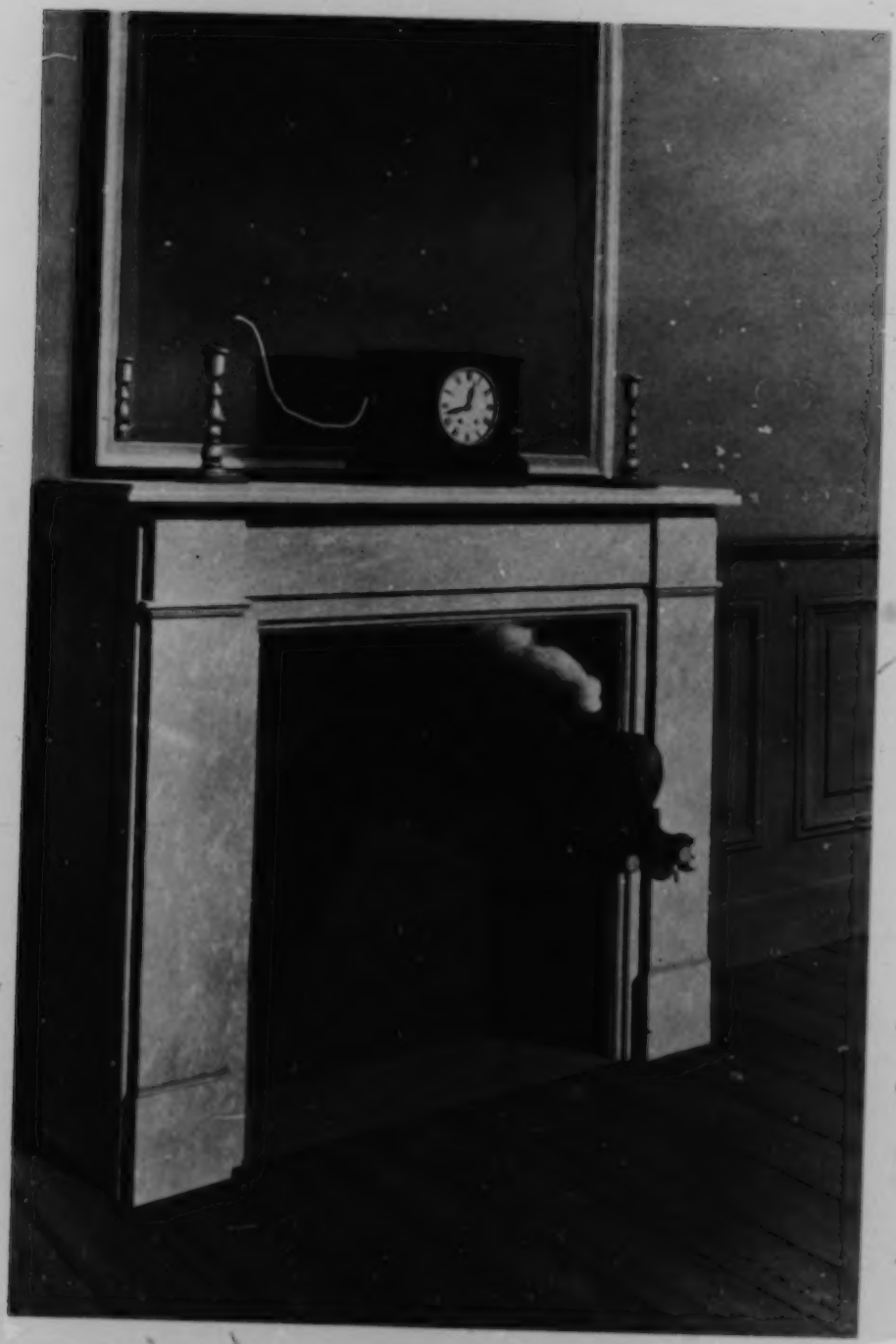
La réponse imprévue / The unexpected answer
1933. Oil, 32⅜ x 21⅛ (41)



La gravitation universelle / Universal gravitation
1943. Oil. 39⅜ x 28¾ (not in exhibition)

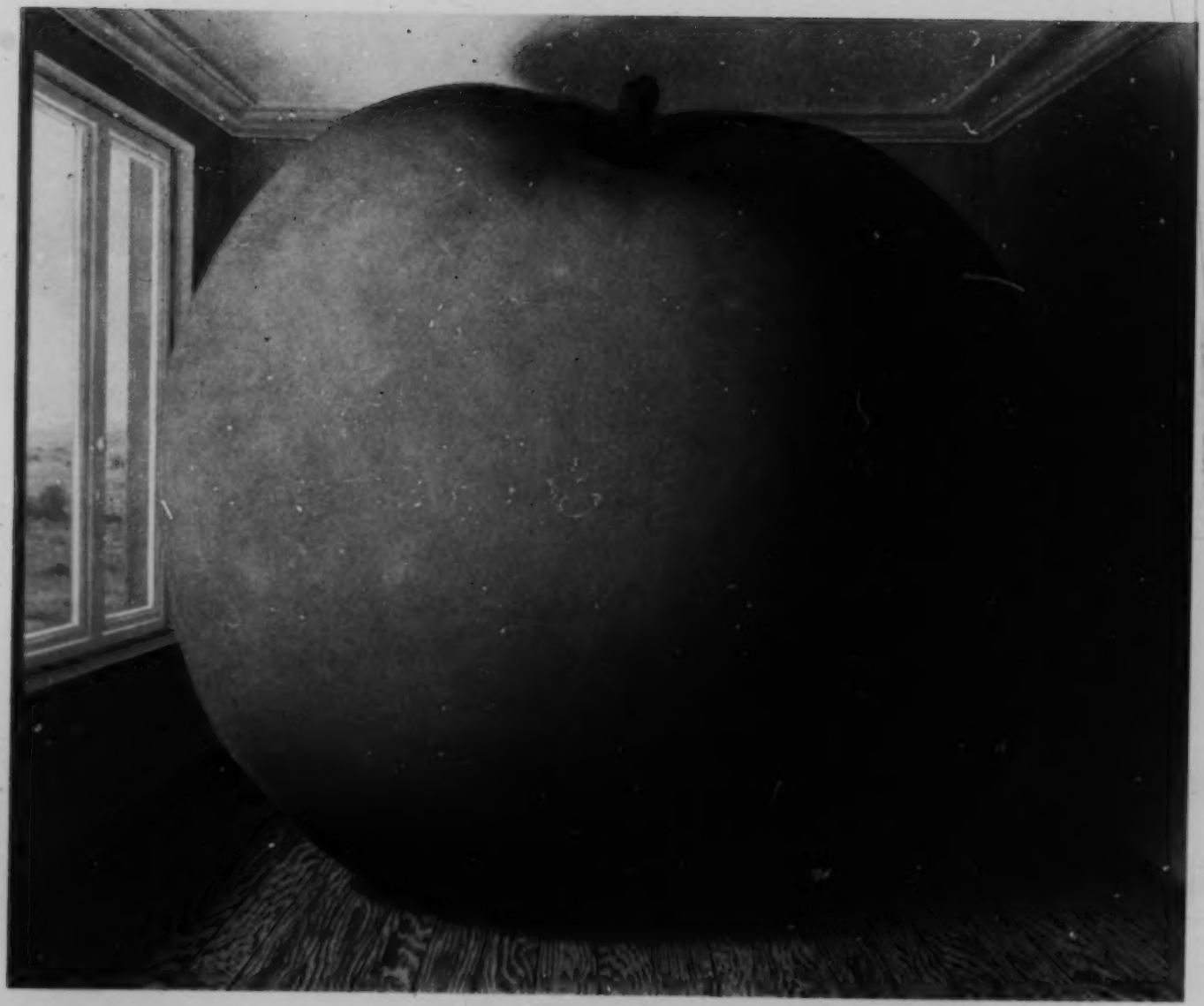


La durée poignardée / Time transfixed
1939. Oil, 57⅛ x 38⅛ (62)



Le modèle rouge / The red model
1935. Oil, 29 x 19¾ (49)

La chambre d'écoute / The listening-room
1952. Oil, 17¾ x 21¾ (78)



When we normally speak of likeness, we attribute it to things which may or may not have a common nature. People say 'as like as two peas' and also that a fake is like the genuine article. This so-called likeness is nothing more than similarities perceived when thought examines, evaluates and compares objects.

Likeness is grounded in the essential act of thinking, the act of likening. Thought likens by merging with what the world gives it and at the same time handing it on to the mystery without which there could be no world, still less, thought.

Inspiration is the circumstance in which likeness arises. Thought is like only when inspired.

The art of painting – when conceived as something other than more or less innocent mystification – is incapable of putting forth ideas or of expressing feelings: the image of a weeping face does not express grief, for a feeling or an idea has no palpable form that could be represented visibly. A circle drawn on a picture is the equivalent of a 'round thought', but does not represent the idea or the feeling of the circle; that is the province of philosophy.

The art of painting – which really ought to be called the art of likeness – permits the description with paint of a thought capable of becoming palpable. This thought only comprises shapes presented to us by the world of appearance: people, stars, furniture, weapons, solids, inscriptions, etc. Likeness brings these shapes together spontaneously in an order which directly invokes mystery. The description of such a thought does not tolerate originality. Originality or fantasy would only enfeeble and impoverish it. The paltry gain of an original way of describing likeness would mean the loss of precision and charm in an image of likeness. There cannot be divergent manners of rendering inspired thought which resembles the world of appearance.

The question of 'how to paint' a likeness must be confined to spreading paint over a surface in such a way as to allow its real appearance to recede and let through a likeness.

If it so happens that people become moved or involved when looking at an image of likeness, it must not be inferred that this 'expresses' an emotion or states an idea. That would be as naive as to believe, say, that a cake expresses what the baker was thinking when he made it.

An image should not be confused with something tangible: the image of a pipe is not a pipe. The desire to interpret an image of likeness – in order to indulge some supposed freedom – means disregarding an inspired image and substituting a gratituous interpretation which in turn may lead to an endless series of superfluous interpretations. An image of likeness can never result from the illustration of a 'subject', whether banal or extraordinary, nor from the expression of an idea or feeling. There is nothing 'symbolic' about it, since symbols need no inspiration to be chosen as 'subjects' for representation.

Inspiration gives the painter what he must paint: likeness, which is a thought capable of becoming visible through painting: for instance, the thought might be a pipe with the inscription, 'This is not a pipe', or the thought might consist of a nocturnal landscape under a sunny sky. Such thoughts evoke mystery, '*de jure*', whereas, '*de facto,*' mystery is evoked by a pipe resting on an ash-tray, or by a nocturnal landscape under a starlit sky.

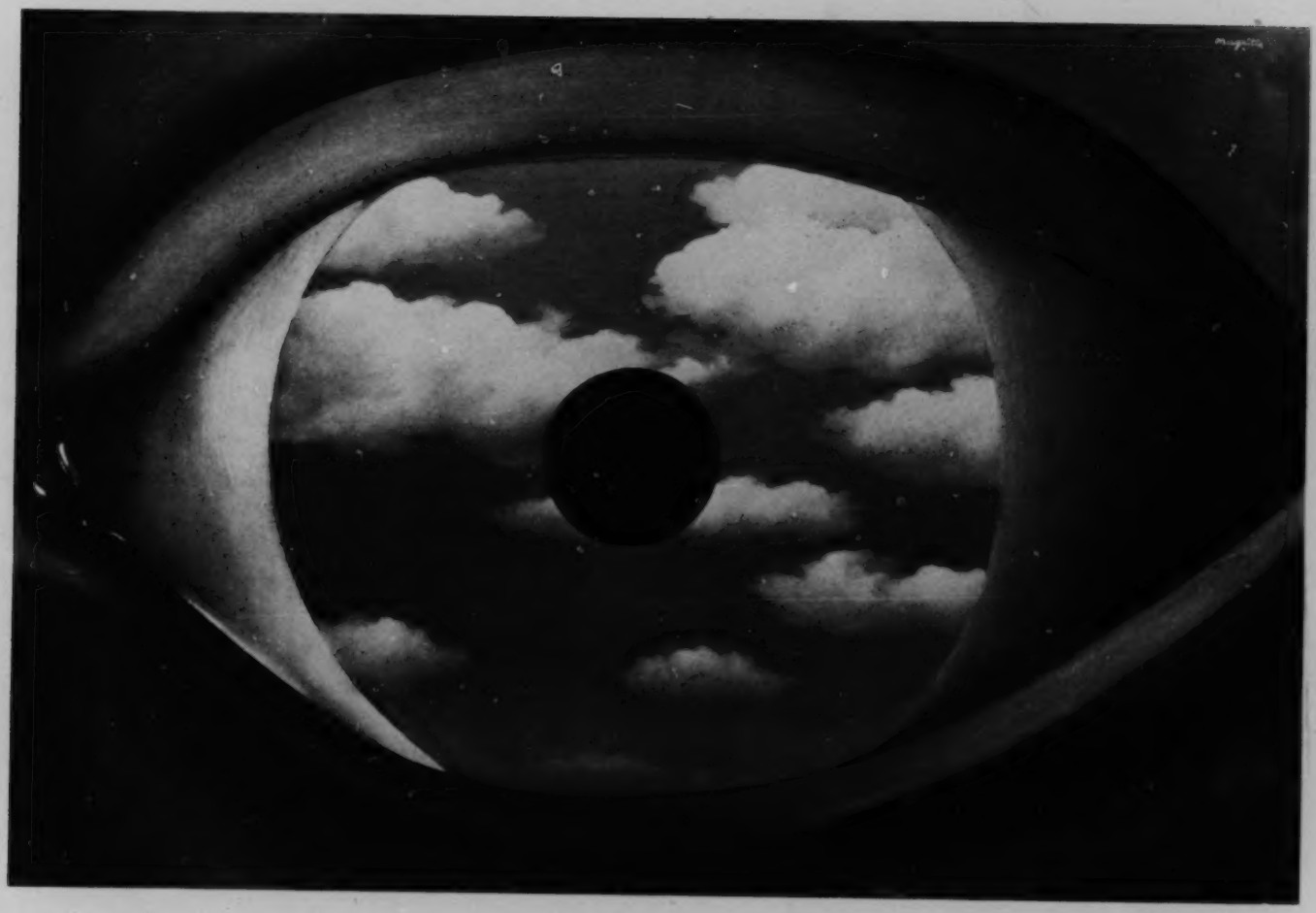
It must be said that just any image which denies 'common sense' does not '*de jure*' evoke mystery if it is no more than an occasion for contrariness. Likeness is not concerned with agreeing with 'common sense', or with defying it, but only with spontaneously assembling shapes from the world of appearance in an order given by inspiration.

The words used in naming images of likeness aptly no longer remain familiar or strange. Inspiration is needed to say them and to hear them.

Les valeurs personnelles / Personal values
1952. Oil, 31½ x 39½ (79)

La lunette d'approche / The field-glass
1963. Oil. 69 x 45¼ (94)

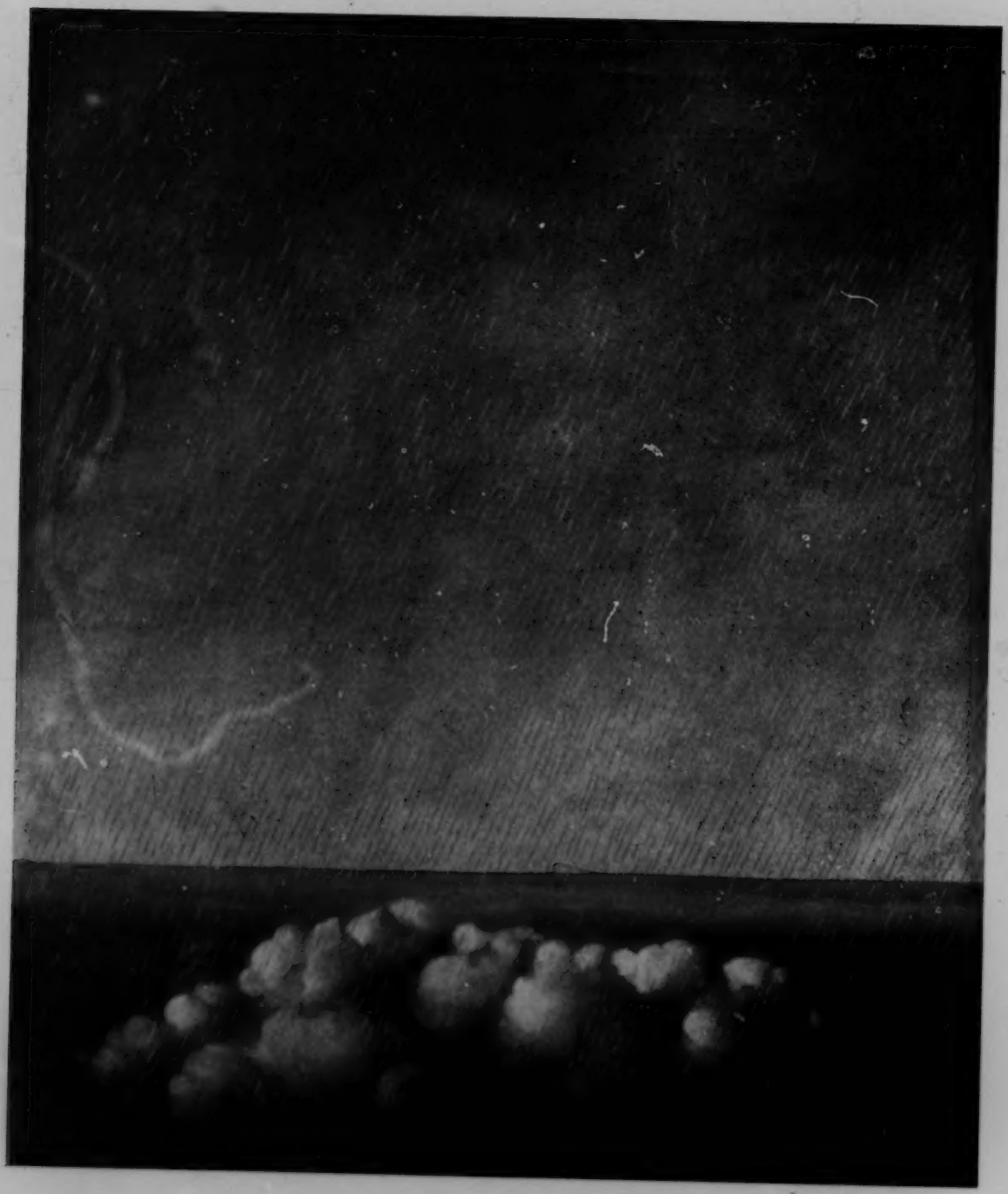
Le faux miroir / The false mirror
*c.*1929. Oil, 21¼ x 31⅞ (30)



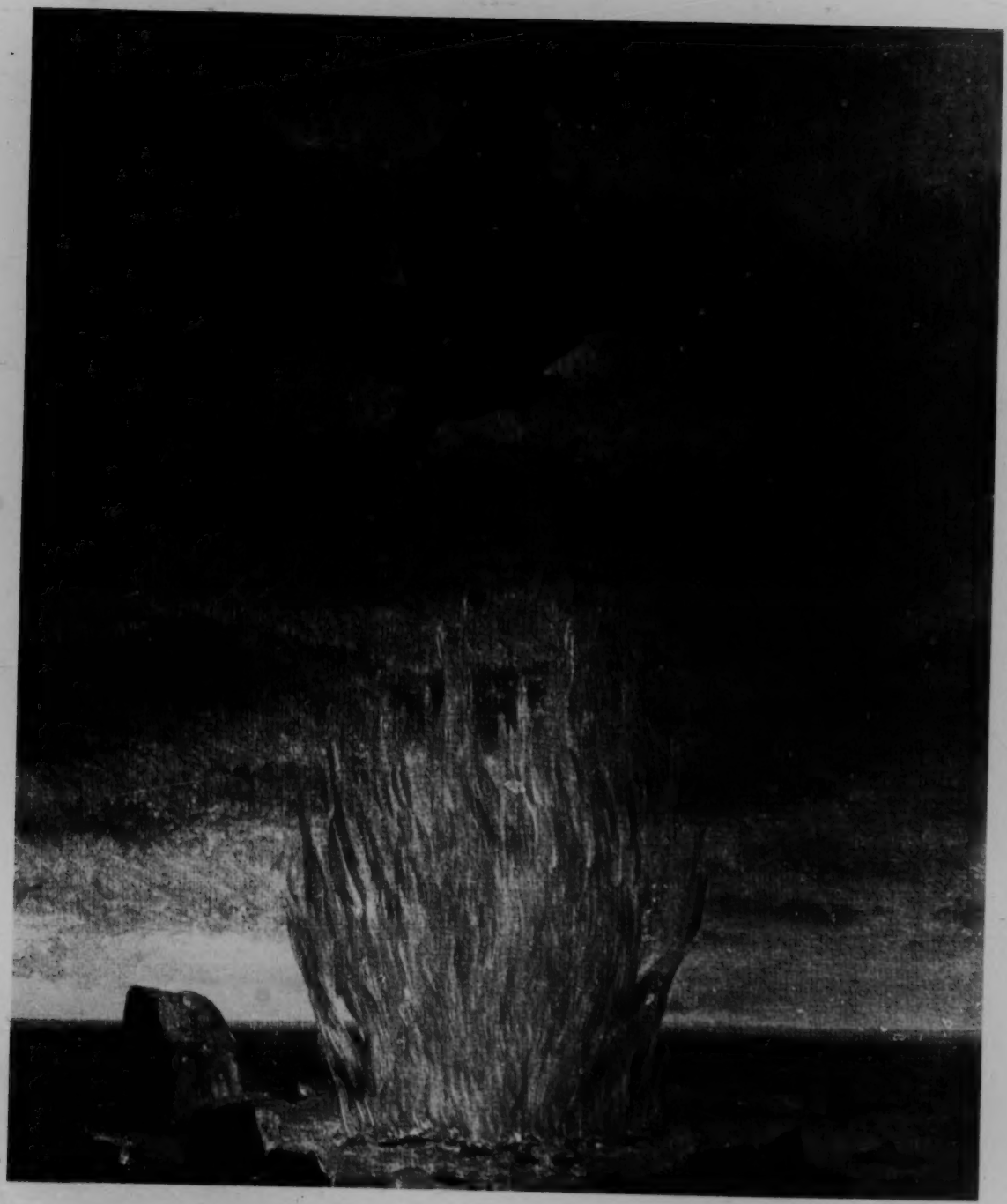
Les mémoires d'un saint / The memoirs of a saint
1960. Oil, 31⅛ x 39⅜ (89)

La grande famille / The large family
1963. Oil, 39⅜ x 32 (66)

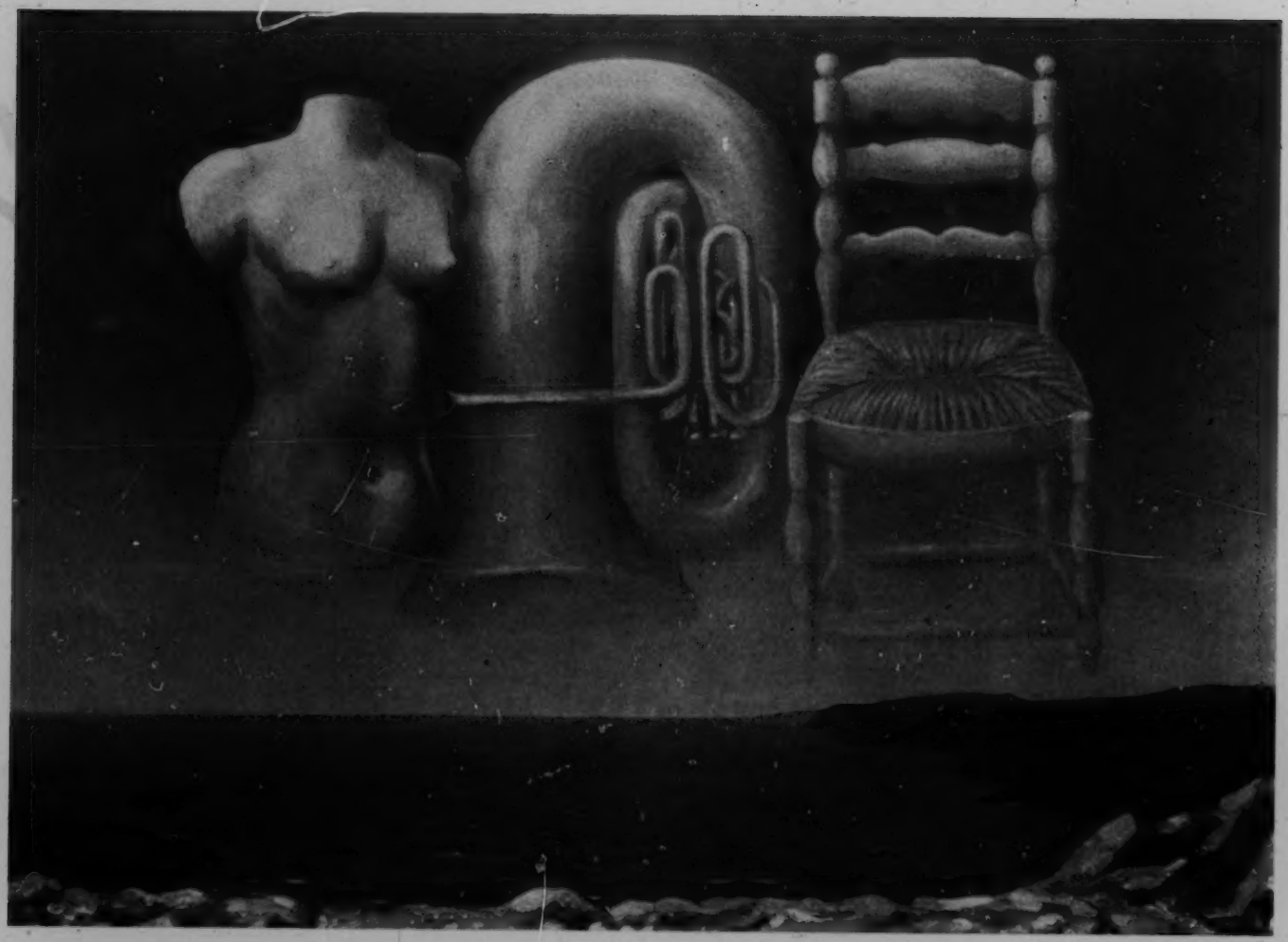
Le chant de l'orage / The song of the storm
1937. Oil, 25⅜ x 21½ (59)



Les fanatiques / The fanatics
1955. Oil, 23⅜ x 19¾ (81)



Le temps menaçant / Threatening weather
1928. Oil, 21¼ x 28¾ (38)



Le drapeau noir / The black flag
1937. Oil, 21¼ x 28¾ (53)

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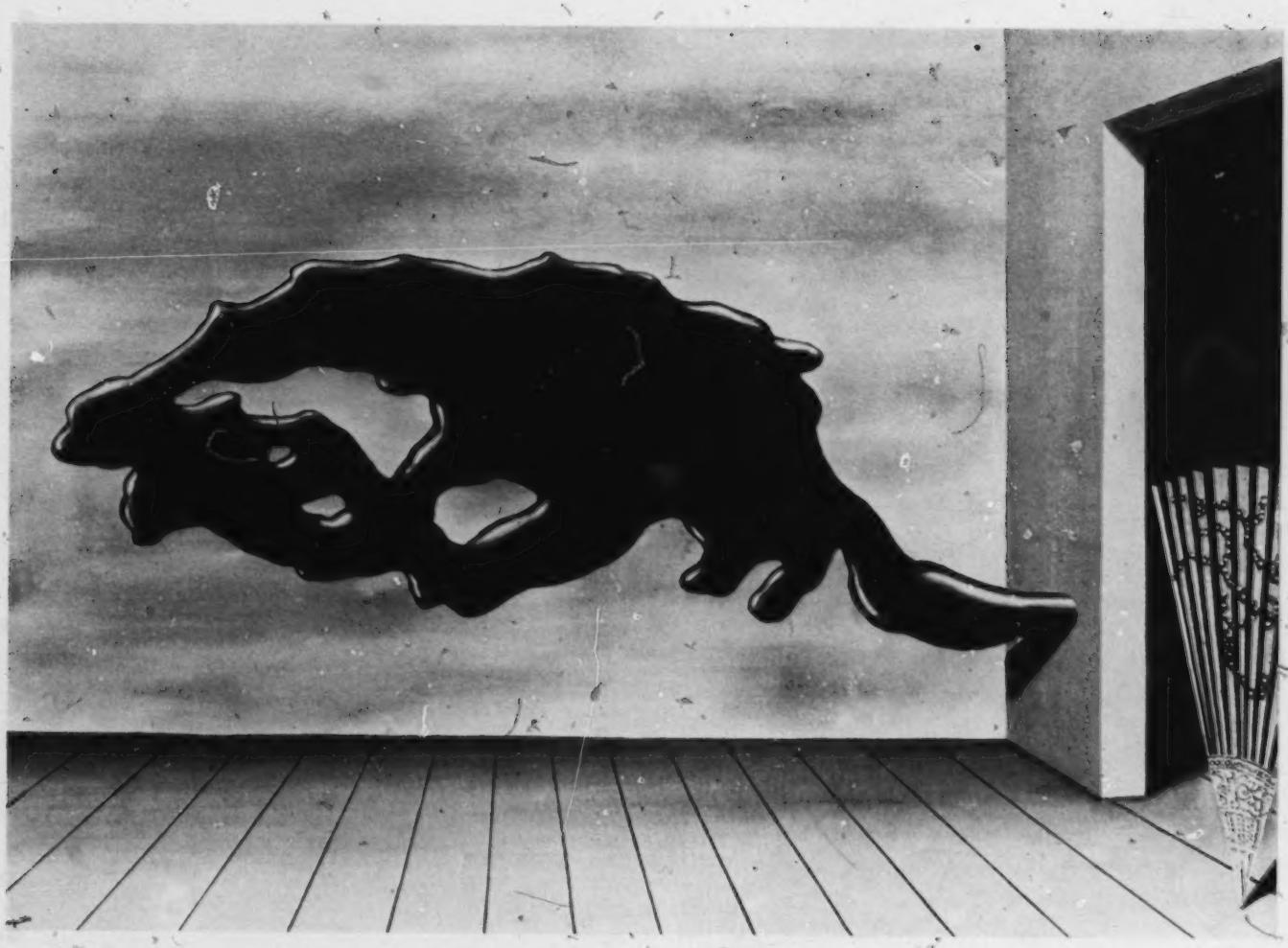
La sortie de l'école / Coming out of school
1927. Oil, 28⅞ x 39¼ (9)



La légende dorée / The golden legend
1958. Oil, 38¾ x 51¼ (35)*

Le cap des tempêtes / The cape of storms
1964. Oil. 39⅜ x 31⅞ (96)

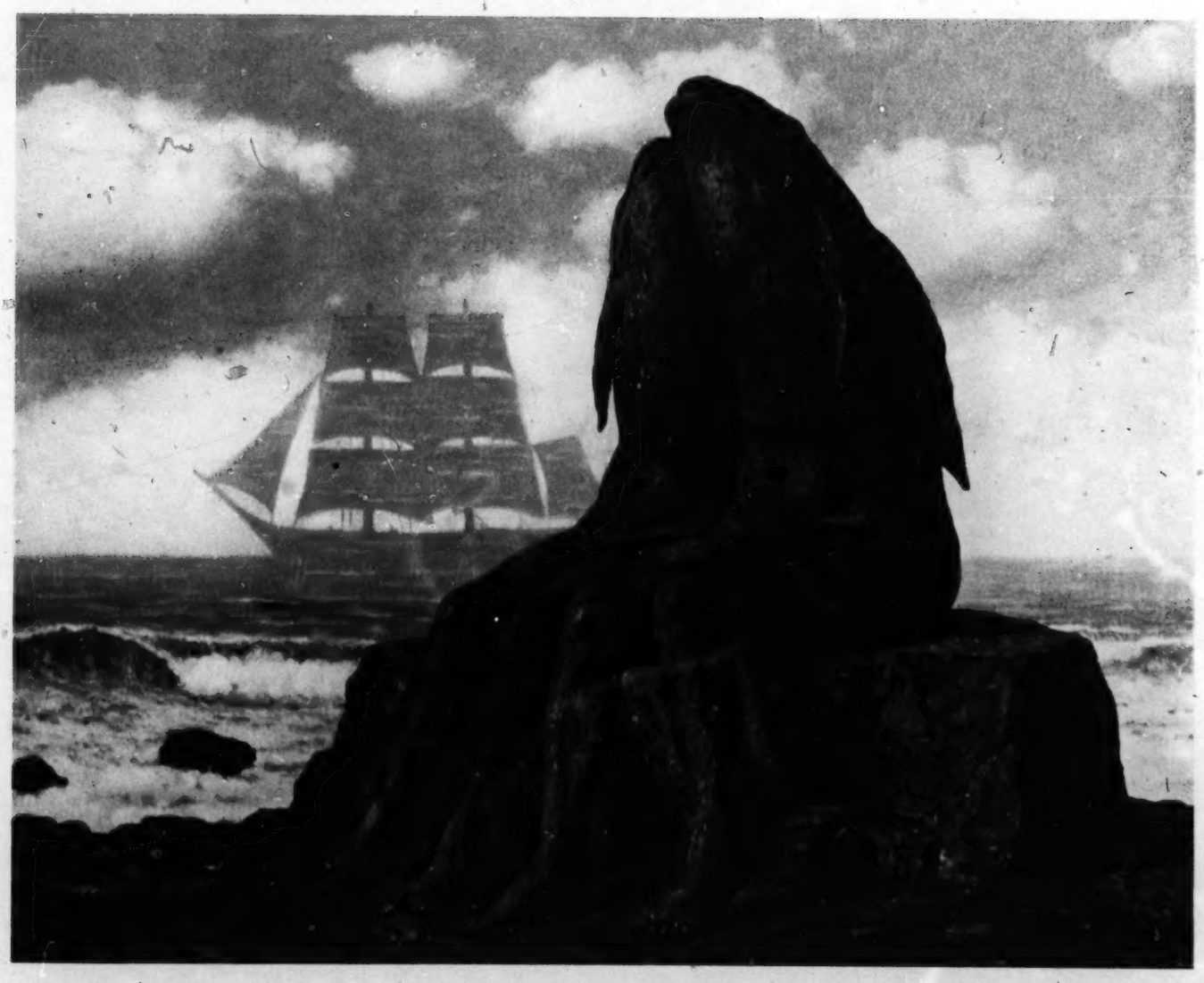
Le sens des réalités / The sense of realities
1963. Oil, 69 x 45½ (95)

Le voyageur / The traveller
1935. Oil: 21½ x 25½ (48)

L'idole / The idol
1965. Oil, 21¼ x 25⅜ (99)

Le domaine d'Arnheim / The domain of Arnheim
1962. Oil, 57⅞ x 44⅞ (93)

Le chant d'amour / The song of love
1948. Oil, 31⅞ x 39⅜ (not in exhibition)

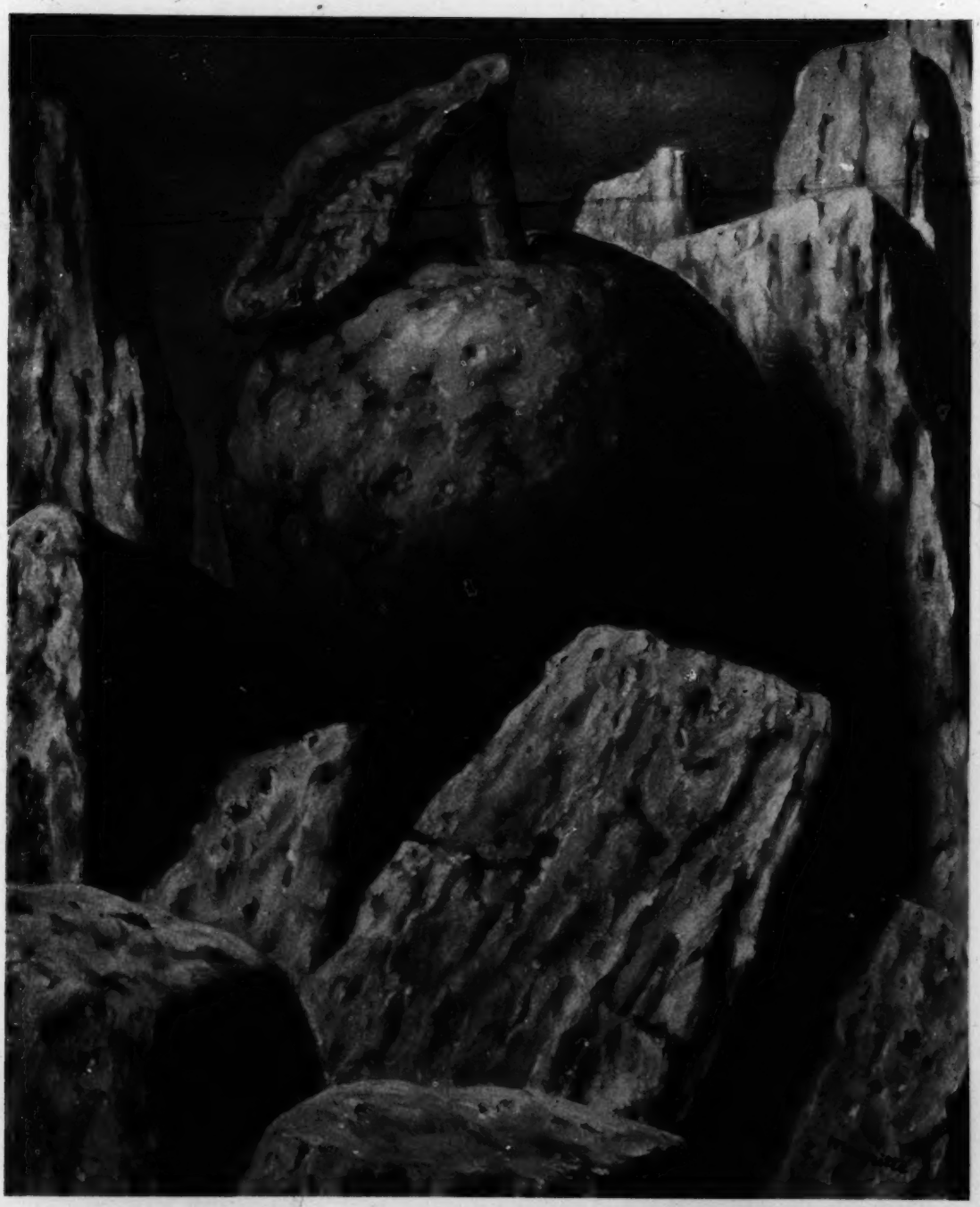


My defeatism is related to life's frustrations – and to total rejection of the idea that mystery (without which nothing would exist) can be a refuge or any help at all.

La clef de verre / The glass key
1959. Oil, 51¼ x 63⅞ (86)

Souvenir de voyage III / Memory of a journey III
1951. Oil, 33 x 25½ (75)

La parole donnée / The pledge
1950. Oil, 18 x 15 (73)

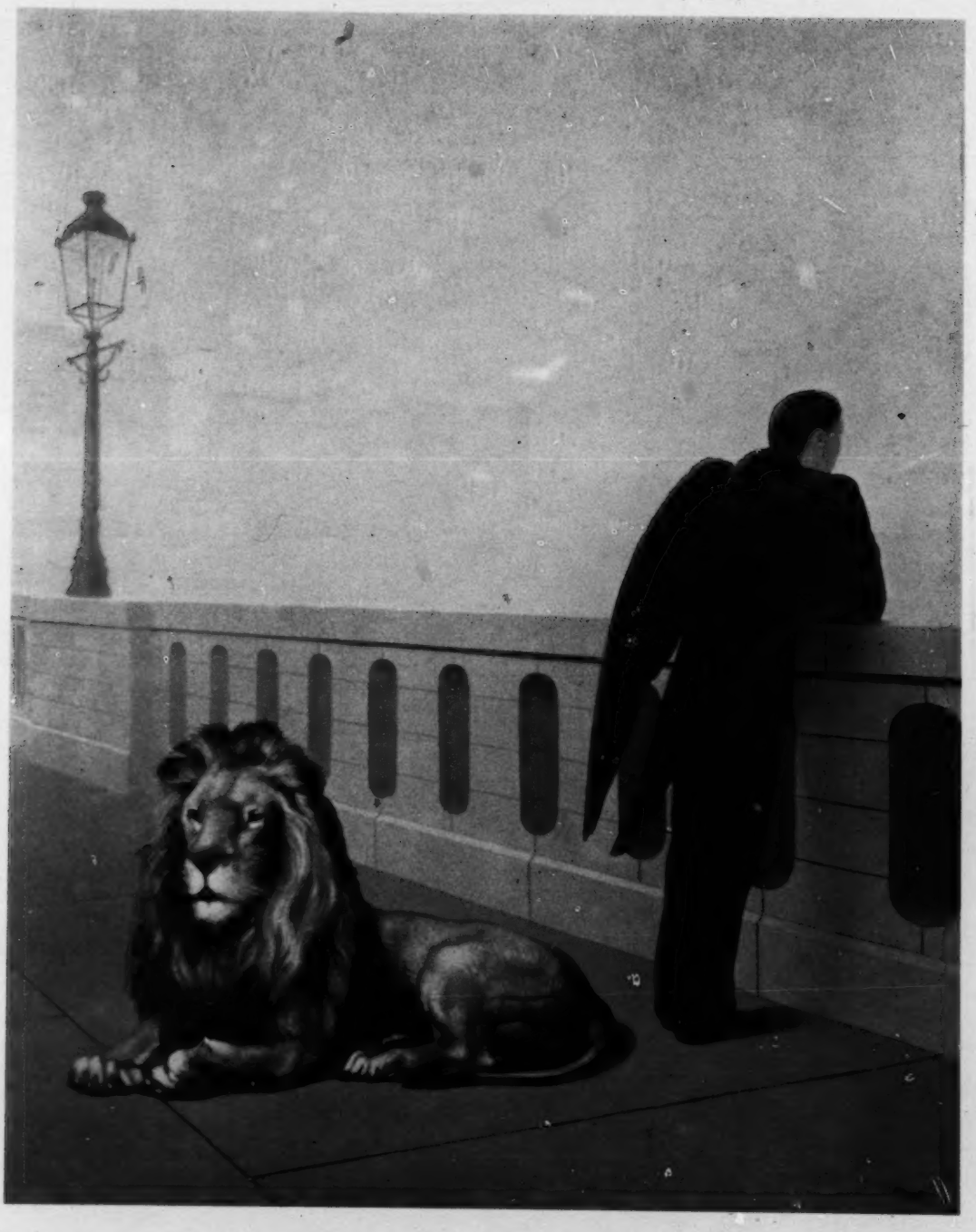


Journal intime I / Private diary I
1951. Oil, 31½ x 25¾ (74)

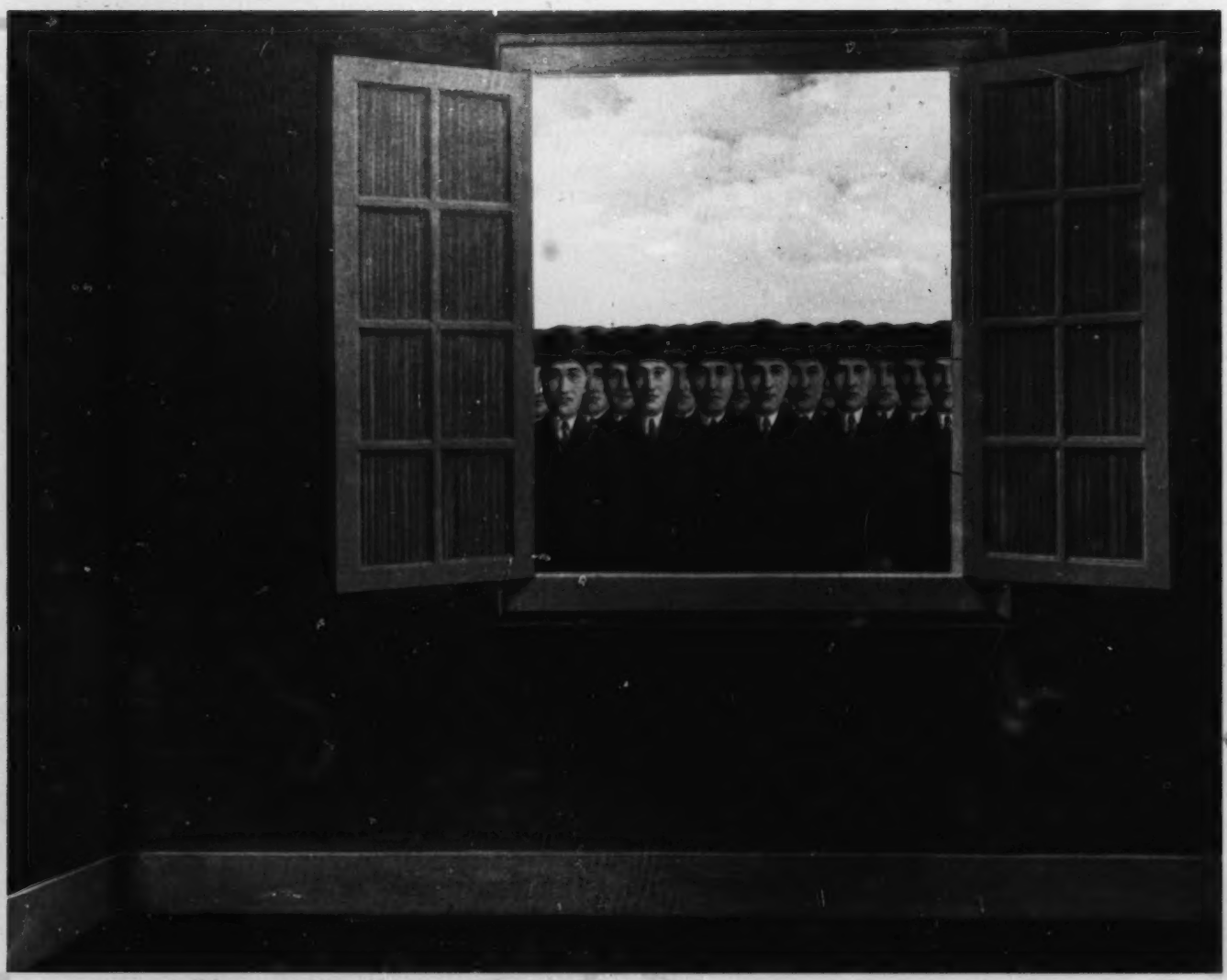
Le chant de la violette / The song of the violet
1951. Oil, 39⅜ x 31⅞ (72)

A la rencontre du plaisir / Going towards pleasure
1950. Oil, 19⅞ x 23½ (71)

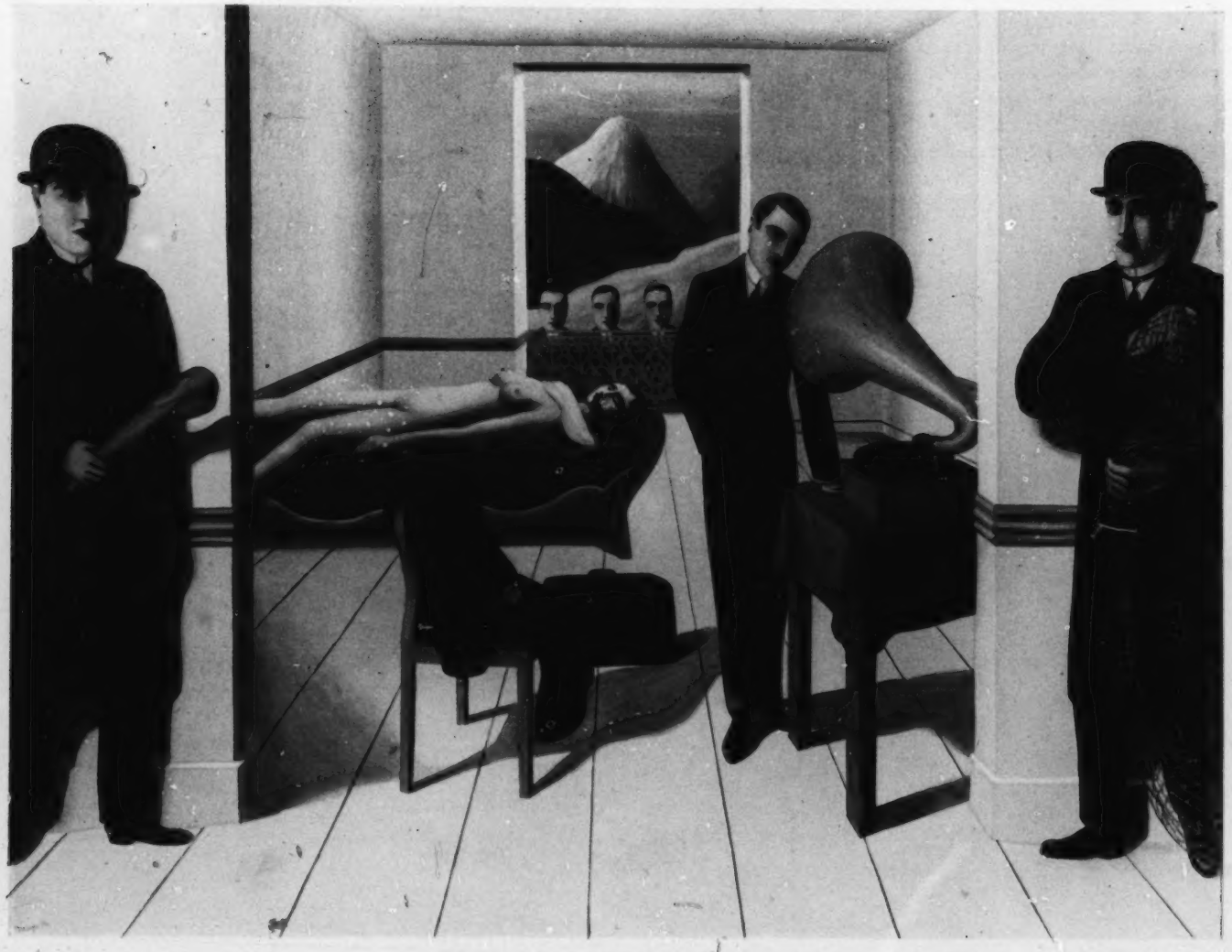
Le mal du pays / Homesickness
1940–41. Oil, 39¾ x 32⅛ (63)



Le mois des vendanges / The time of the harvest
1959. Oil. 51⅛ x 63¾ (not in exhibition)



L'assassin menacé / The threatened assassin
1926 or 1927. Oil, 59¼ x 76⅞ (7)



When he was twelve, his mother, who was still young, committed suicide.

She shared her room with her youngest child and he, finding himself alone in the middle of the night, woke the family. They searched the house to no purpose, then noticing footprints on the steps and the pavement, they followed these and came to the bridge over the Sambre, the local river.

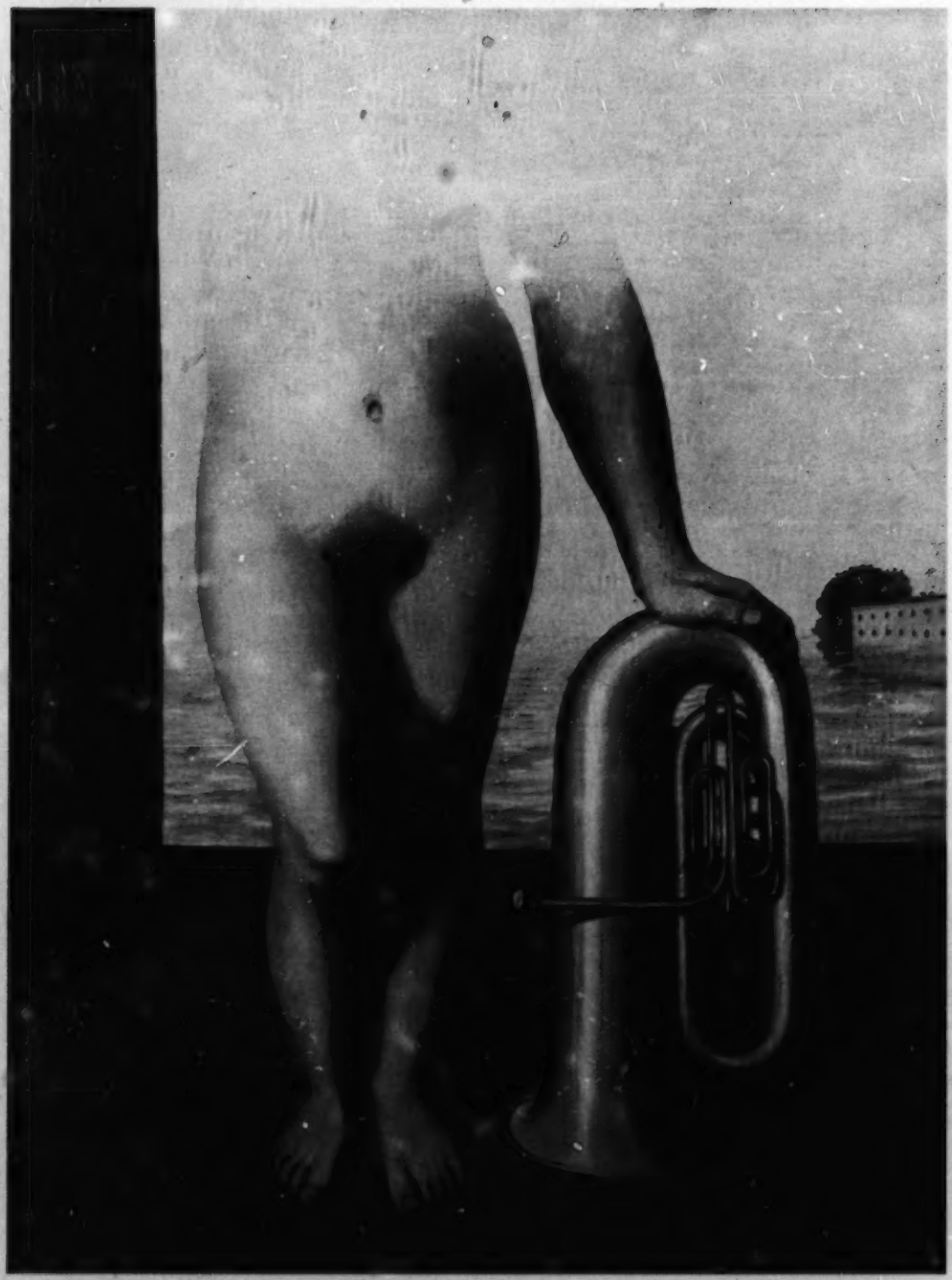
The painter's mother had thrown herself into the water and, when they fished out her corpse, her face was covered by her night-gown. It was never known whether she had used it to cover her eyes against the death she had chosen or whether the swirling water had veiled her in this way.

The only feeling Magritte remembers – or imagines he remembers – with regard to this event is great pride at the thought of being the pitiful centre of a tragedy.

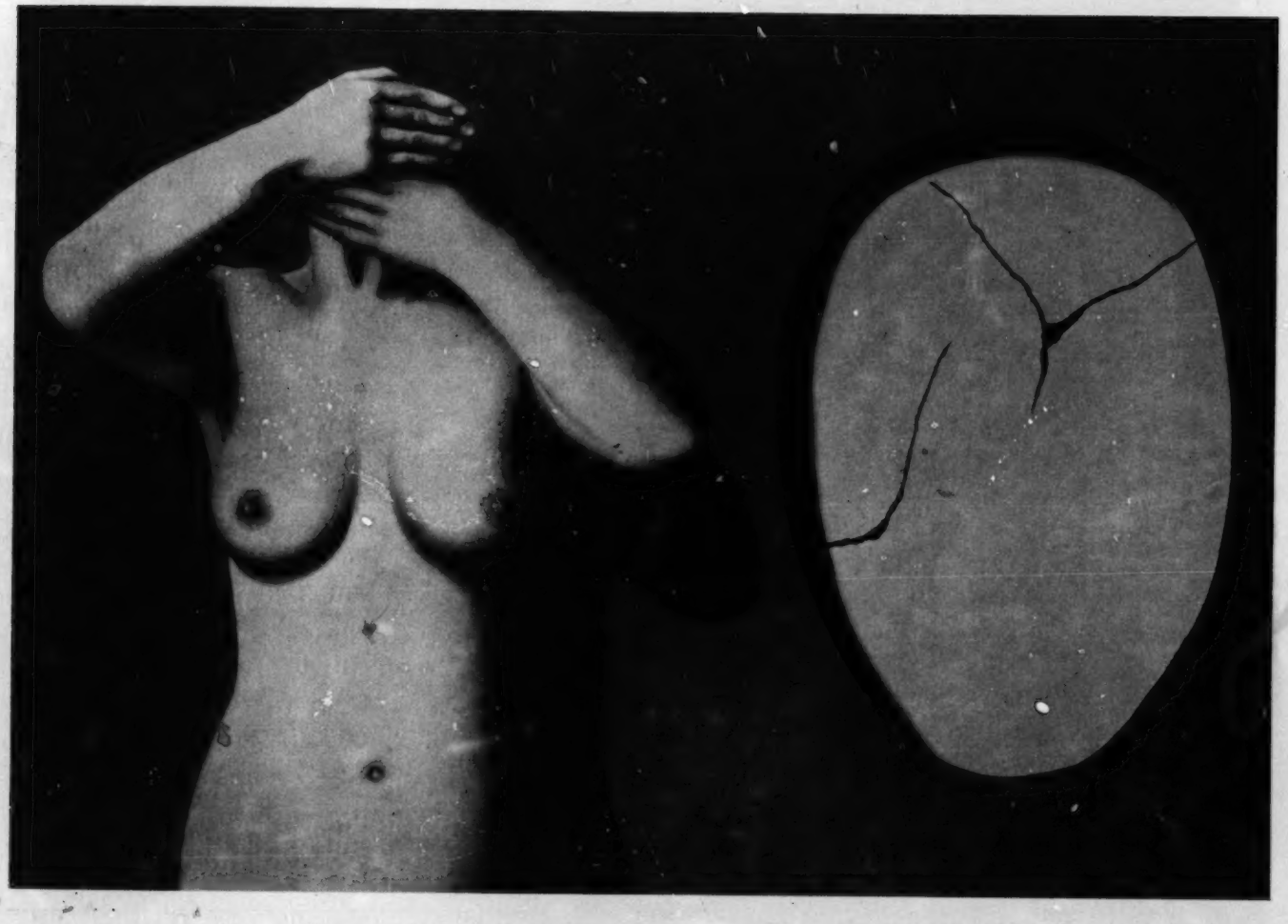
Scutenaire

L'histoire centrale / The heart of the matter
1928. Oil, 45⅛ x 31½ (21)

L'inondation / The flood
1931. Oil, 28¾ x 21⅜ (36)



Le genre nocturne / Nocturne
1928. Oil, 31 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 45 $\frac{7}{8}$ (19)



In the early days of his marriage he was alone in the house while his wife was in town with a friend.

The bell rings. It's the friend's husband, who has arranged to meet his wife at Magritte's house.

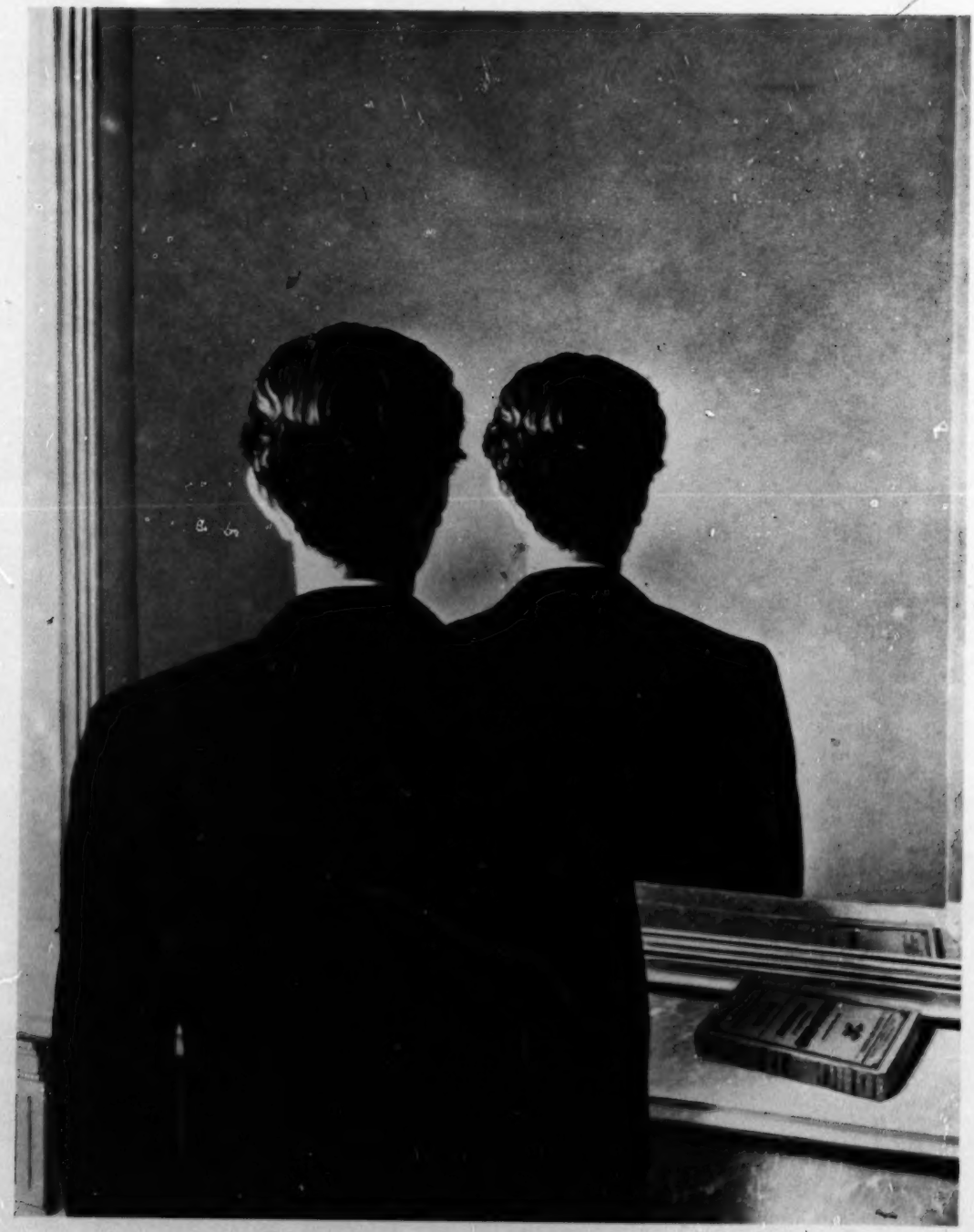
He introduces himself, as they haven't met before. He is highly respectable, bourgeois, an habitué of the casinos.

Magritte invites him in, steps back to let him pass and, the moment he sets foot in the drawing-room, gives him a tremendous kick up the backside. The astounded visitor hesitates between the multitude of reactions that come to mind, and in the end sits down as if nothing had happened on the chair which Magritte, as if nothing had happened, hastens to offer him.

Scutenaire

Les amants / The lovers
1928. Oil, 21⅛ x 28⅞ (22)

La reproduction interdite / Not to be reproduced
1937. Oil, 32 x 25⅜ (56)

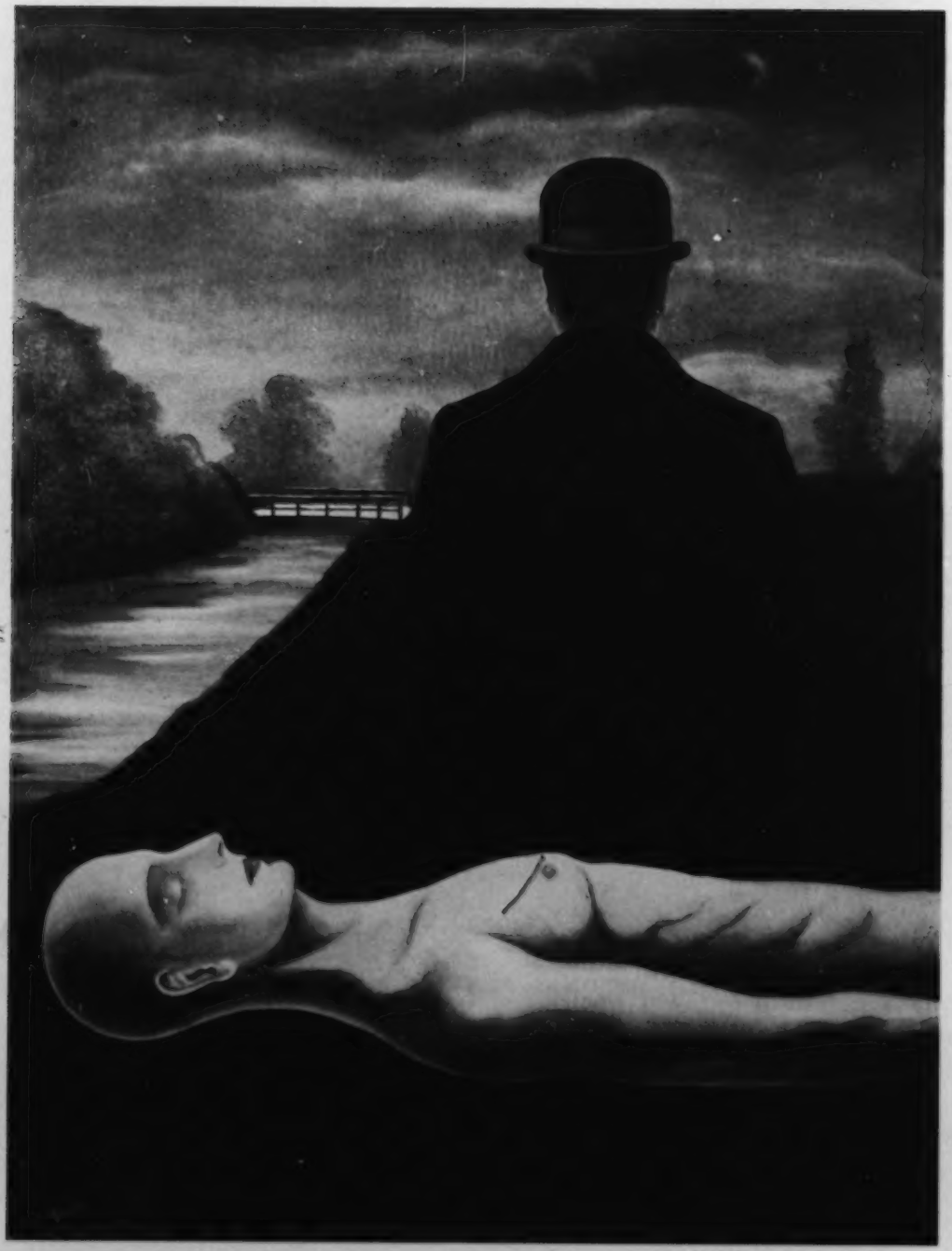


Les cornes du désir / The horns of desire
1960 Oil, 45¼ x 35 (90)

Le principe du plaisir / The pleasure principle
1937. Oil, 28¾ x 21¼ (55)

L'homme au chapeau melon / The man in the bowler hat
1964. Oil, 25½ x 19⅝ (97)

Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire / The musings of a solitary walker
1926 or 1927. Oil, 54¾ x 41¼ (6)



L'ami intime / The intimate friend
1958. Oil, 28⅜ x 25¼ (84)

The other day someone asked me what the relationship was between my life and my art. I couldn't really think of any, except that life obliges me to do something, so I paint. I do not believe that man decides anything – either the future or the present of humanity. A universe of chance? I don't know. Unknown forces? I hate talking about that because it doesn't mean anything (like talking about symbols). I think we are responsible for the universe, but this does not mean that we decide anything. Cause and effect? That's determinism, and there again, one would have to believe in it. If one is a determinist, one must always believe that there is a cause which produces the same effect. I am not a determinist, but I don't believe in chance either. It serves as still another 'explanation' of the world. The problem lies precisely in not accepting any explanation of the world either through chance or determinism. I am not responsible for my belief. It is not even I who decides that I am not responsible – and so on to infinity: I am obliged not to believe. There is no point of departure.

Le fils de l'homme / The son of man
1964. Oil, 45½ x 35 (98)

Golconde / Golconda
1953. 31¾ x 39½ (80)

Catalogue

All works are in oil on canvas unless otherwise stated. Measurements are in inches; height precedes width.

1 *Les signes du soir*
Signs of evening
1926
29⅛ x 25½
Collection Claude Spaak, Choisel, Seine-et-Oise
Illus. p.46

2 *L'âge des merveilles*
The age of marvels
1926
47⅜ x 31½
Galerie Isy Brachot, Brussels

3 *Paysage*
Landscape
1926
39½ x 28⅞
Collection Pierre E. Crowet, Brussels
Illus. p.62

4 *Panorama populaire*
Popular panorama
1926
47⅜ x 31½
Collection E. L. T. Mesens, Brussels

5 *L'homme du large*
The man of the sea
1926
55 x 41⅜
Collection Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels
Illus. p.78

6 *Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire*
The musings of a solitary walker
1926 or 1927
54¾ x 41½
Collection E. L. T. Mesens, Brussels
Illus. p.122

7 *L'assassin menacé*
The threatened assassin
1926 or 1927
59½ x 76⅞
Collection The Museum of Modern Art, New York : Kay Sage Tanguy Fund, 1966
Illus. p.111

8 *Le dormeur téméraire*
The reckless sleeper
1927
45½ x 31½
Collection Claude Spaak, Choisel, Seine-et-Oise
Illus. p.17

9 *La sortie de l'école*
Coming out of school
1927
28⅞ x 39¾
Collection Madame Claude Spaak, Choisel, Seine-et-Oise
Illus. p.94

10 *La parure de l'orage*
The regalia of the storm
1927
32 x 45⅜
Urvater Collection, Belgium

11 *La fin des contemplations*
The end of contemplation
1927
Oil on canvas, with stud fasteners,
28¾ x 39⅜
Urvater Collection, Belgium
Illus. p.39

12 *Le musée d'une nuit*
Relics of a night
1927
19⅞ x 25⅜
Collection Marcel Mabille, Brussels
Illus. p.23

13 *Les objets familiers*
The familiar objects
1927 or 1928
32 x 45⅜
Collection E. L. T. Mesens, Brussels
Illus. p.18

14 *Entracte*
Intermission
1927 or 1928
45 x 63⅜
Private collection
Illus. p.59

15 *La femme introuvable*
Find the woman !
1927 or 1928
32 x 45½
Collection E. L. T. Mesens, Brussels
Illus. p.20

16 *Les idées de l'acrobate*
Acrobatic ideas
1927 or 1928
45⅜ x 31⅞
Urvater Collection, Belgium
Illus. p.57

17 *La doublure du sommeil*
The lining of sleep
1927 or 1928
20 x 25⅜
Collection Amiel E. Najar
Illus. p.26

18 *Le démon de la perversité*
The demon of perversity
1928
32 x 45⅜
Collection Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels
Illus. p. 21

19 *Le genre nocturne*
Nocturne
1928
31 7/8 x 45 7/8
Collection E. L. T. Mesens, Brussels
Illus. p.115

20 *Les jours gigantesques*
The titanic days
1928
45 1/2 x 31 7/8
Private collection, Brussels
Illus. p.61

21 *L'histoire centrale*
The heart of the matter
1928
45 3/8 x 31 1/2
Collection Marcel Mabille, Brussels
Illus. p.113

22 *Les amants*
The lovers
1928
21 3/4 x 28 7/8
Collection Richard S. Zeisler, New York
Illus. p.117

23 *Le corps bleu*
The blue body
1928
28 1/4 x 21 3/8
Private collection, London
Illus. p.34

24 *Le masque vide*
The empty mask
1928
28 3/4 x 36 1/4
Garick Fine Arts, Inc., Philadelphia
Illus. p.31

25 *La vie secrète IV*
The secret life IV
1928
28 3/4 x 21 1/4
Private collection
Illus p.24

26 *L'usage de la parole*
The use of speech
1928
21 3/4 x 28 3/4
Collection E. L. T. Mesens, Brussels
Illus. p.27

27 *Personnage marchant vers l'horizon*
Person walking towards the horizon
1928 or 1929
31 7/8 x 45 3/8
Private collection, Brussels
Illus. p.29

28 *Le palais d'une courtisane*
A courtesan's palace
1928 or 1929
21 3/8 x 28 3/4
Private collection
Illus. p.25

29 *Le masque vide*
The empty mask
1928 or 1929
32 x 45 3/4
Collection Mr and Mrs Raymond J. Braun, Sarasota, Florida
Illus. p.40

30 *Le faux miroir*
The false mirror
*c.*1929
21 1/4 x 31 7/8
Collection The Museum of Modern Art, New York : Purchase, 1936
Illus. p.87

31 *Grelots roses, ciels en lambeaux*
Pink bells, tattered skies
1929 or 1930
33 3/8 x 44 1/4
Urvater Collection, Belgium
Illus. p.38

32 *Au seuil de la liberté*
On the threshold of liberty
1930
45 3/8 x 57 7/8
Collection Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam
Illus. p.41

33 *L'annonciation*
The annunciation
1930
45 x 57 3/4
Collection E. L. T. Mesens, Brussels
Illus. p.43

34 *La belle captive*
The fair captive
1931
15 x 21 3/8
Collection Joseph Capuano, London

35 *Le calcul mental*
Mental arithmetic
1931
25 3/4 x 45 3/8
Collection Mr and Mrs James Laughlin, Norfolk, Connecticut
Illus. p.77

36 *L'inondation*
The flood
1931
28 3/4 x 21 3/8
Collection Crédit Communal de Belgique
Illus. p.114

37 *Portrait de E. L. T. Mesens*
1931
28½ x 21¼
Private collection, London

38 *Le temps menaçant*
Threatening weather
1928
21¼ x 28¾
Penrose Collection, London
Illus. p.92

39 *L'attentat*
Act of violence
*c.*1932
27½ x 39⅜
Private collection, Bruges : on loan to the Stedelijk Groeningemuseum, Bruges
Illus. p.44

40 *Portrait de Madame Spaak*
1933
23¾ x 31⅞
Collection Claude Spaak, Choisel, Seine-et-Oise

41 *La réponse imprévue*
The unexpected answer
1933
32⅜ x 21⅛
Collection Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels
Illus. p.79

42 *La condition humaine I*
The human condition I
1933
39½ x 32
Collection Claude Spaak, Choisel, Seine-et-Oise
Illus. p.51

43 *La révolution*
The revolution
1934
Oil on wood, 25⅞ x 19⅝
Collection Claude Spaak, Choisel, Seine-et-Oise
Illus. p.47

44 *Le viol*
The rape
1934
28½ x 21
Collection George Melly, London
Illus. p.67

45 *Les liaisons dangereuses*
Dangerous acquaintances
1934 or 1935
28⅞ x 21¼
Collection Madame Claude Marcy
Illus.p.56

46 *Le mouvement perpétuel*
Perpetual motion
1935
21¼ x 28¾
Collection Mr and Mrs Eric Estorick : on loan to the Tate Gallery
Illus. p.74

47 *L'invention collective*
Collective invention
1935
28⅞ x 45⅝
Collection E. L. T. Mesens, Brussels
Illus. p.71

48 *Le voyageur*
The traveller
1935
21¼ x 25½
De Knop Collection, Brussels
Illus. p.98

49 *Le modèle rouge*
The red model
1935
29 x 19¾
Collection Moderna Museet, Stockholm
Illus. p.82

50 *La lampe philosophique*
The philosopher's lamp
1936
18⅛ x 21⅝
Collection E. L. T. Mesens, Brussels
Illus. p.69

51 *La baigneuse du clair au sombre*
Bather between light and darkness
1935 or 1936
35 x 45⅝
Private collection, Brussels
Illus. p.48

52 *La clef des songes*
The key of dreams
1936
16½ x 10¾
Collection Jasper Johns, New York
Illus. p.30

53 *Le drapeau noir*
The black flag
1937
21¼ x 28¾
Collection George Melly, London
Illus. p.93

54 *La méditation*
Meditation
1937
19⅞ x 25½
Collection E. F. W. James, Sussex

55 *Le principe du plaisir*
The pleasure principle
1937
28⅜ x 21¼
Collection E. F. W. James, Sussex
Illus. p.120

56 *La reproduction interdite*
Not to be reproduced
1937
32 x 25⅝
Collection E. F. W. James, Sussex
Illus. p.113

57 *La représentation*
Representation
1937
Oil on canvas on wood,
19⅛ x 17⅜ (irregular)
Penrose Collection, London
Illus. p.35

58 *Le thérapeute*
The therapeutist
1937
36¼ x 25½
Urvater Collection, Belgium
Illus. p.75

59 *Le chant de l'orage*
The song of the storm
1937
25⅜ x 21¼
Private collection
Illus. p.90

60 *Les marches de l'été*
The march of summer
1938
23¾ x 29
Collection Claude Spaak,
Choisel, Seine-et-Oise
Illus. p.55

61 *La grande muraille*
The great wall
1938
27⅛ x 21⅜
Collection Claude Spaak,
Choisel, Seine-et-Oise

62 *La durée poignardée*
Time transfixed
1939
57⅛ x 38⅛
Collection Edward James Foundation
Illus. p.81

63 *Le mal du pays*
Homesickness
1940–1
39¾ x 32⅛
Collection E. L. T. Mesens, Brussels
Illus. p.109

64 *La moisson*
The harvest
1943
23¼ x 31⅛
Private collection
Illus. p.64

65 *La belle captive*
The fair captive
1947
21⅛ x 26¼
Collection Mr and Mrs Brooks Jackson,
New York
Illus. p.49

66 *La grande famille*
The large family
1963
39⅜ x 32
Collection Gustave J. Nellens, Casino
Knokke, Belgium
Illus. p.89

67 *Le galet*
The pebble
1948
39⅜ x 31⅞
Collection Madame René Magritte, Brussels
Illus. p.63

68 *Le domaine d'Arnheim*
The domain of Arnheim
1949
39⅛ x 32
Collection Mr and Mrs Arthur Young,
Philadelphia
Illus. p.53

69 *Cosmogonie élémentaire*
Elementary cosmogony
1949
31⅞ x 39⅜
Christophe de Menil Thurman Collection,
New York
Illus. p.73

70 *Perspective: Madame Récamier de David*
Perspective : Madame Récamier by David
1950
23¾ x 31⅛
Collection J. Vanparys, Brussels
Illus. p.72

71 *A la rencontre du plaisir*
Going towards pleasure
1950
19⅜ x 23⅛
Collection Harry Torczyner, New York
Illus. p.108

72 *Le chant de la violette*
The song of the violet
1951
39⅜ x 31⅞
Collection Madame Debernardi, Brussels
Illus. p.107

73 *La parole donnée*
The pledge
1950
18 x 15
Collection Harry Torczyner, New York
Illus. p.105

74 *Journal intime I*
Private diary I
1951
31⅛ x 25¾
Collection Mr and Mrs Max Wasserman, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts
Illus. p.106

75 *Souvenir de voyage III*
Memory of a journey III
1951
33 x 25½
Adelaide de Menil Collection, New York
Illus. p.104

76 *L'explication*
The explanation
1952
18⅛ x 13¾
Collection Mr and Mrs Harry W. Glasgall, New York

77 *Le secret d'état*
State secret
1952
18 x 15
Collection E. L. T. Mesens, London

78 *La chambre d'écoute*
The listening-room
1952
17¾ x 21¾
Collection Philippa de Menil, Houston, Texas
Illus. p.83

79 *Les valeurs personnelles*
Personal values
1952
31⅛ x 39½
Private collection, U.S.A.
Illus. p.85

80 *Golconde*
Golconda
1953
31¾ x 39½
D. and J. de Menil Collection, Houston, Texas
Illus. p.126

81 *Les fanatiques*
The fanatics
1955
23⅜ x 19¾
Collection Gustave J. Nellens, Casino Knokke, Belgium
Illus. p.91

82 *Les promenades d'Euclide*
Euclidean walks
1955
64 x 51¼
Collection The Minneapolis Institute of Arts : William Hood Dunwoody Fund
Illus. p.50

83 *Nuit de Pise*
Night in Pisa
1958
38⅛ x 51⅛
Collection Mr and Mrs Henry J. Heinz II, New York

84 *L'ami intime*
The intimate friend
1958
28⅜ x 25½
Collection Mr and Mrs Max Wasserman, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts
Illus. p.123

85 *La légende dorée*
The golden legend
1958
38¼ x 51¼
Collection Harry Torczyner, New York
Illus. p.95

86 *La clef de verre*
The glass key
1959
51⅛ x 63⅞
D. and J. de Menil Collection, Houston, Texas
Illus. p.103

87 *La bataille de l'Argonne*
The battle of the Argonne
1959
19⅝ x 24
Collection Malcolm McCorquodale, Jnr, New York

88 *La voix du sang*
Blood is thicker than water
1959
45⅜ x 35
Collection Museum des 20. Jahrhunderts, Vienna

89 *Les mémoires d un saint*
The memoirs of a saint
1960
31⅛ x 39⅜
Private collection
Illus. p.88

90 *Les cornes du désir*
The horns of desire
1960
45¼ x 35
Private collection
Illus. p.119

91 *L'enfance d'Icare*
The childhood of Icarus
1960
38 x 51
Collection Mr and Mrs Alan H. Kempner, New York
Illus. p.45

92 *Les barricades mystérieuses*
The mysterious barricades
1961
31⅜ x 50½
Collection L. Arnold Weissberger, New York

93 *Le domaine d'Arnheim*
The domain of Arnheim
1962
57⅛ x 44⅞
Collection Madame René Magritte, Brussels
Illus. p.100

94 *La lunette d'approche*
The field-glass
1963
69 x 45¼
Collection Rice University, Houston, Texas
Illus. p.86

95 *Le sens des réalités*
The sense of realities
1963
69 x 45½
Collection Oonagh, Lady Oranmore and Browne, Co. Wicklow
Illus. p.97

96 *Le cap des tempêtes*
The cape of storms
1964
39⅜ x 31⅛
Collection Gustave J. Nellens, Casino Knokke, Belgium
Illus. p.96

97 *L'homme au chapeau melon*
The man in the bowler hat
1964
25½ x 19⅛
Collection Simone Withers Swan, New York
Illus. p.121

98 *Le fils de l'homme*
The son of man
1964
45½ x 35
Collection Harry Torczyner, New York
Illus. p.125

99 *L'idole*
The idol
1965
21½ x 25⅛
Private collection, New York
Illus. p.99

100 *L'aimable vérité*
The pleasant truth
1966
35 x 51½
Alexander Iolas, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Rome, Madrid
Illus. p.19

101 *Le pèlerin*
The pilgrim
1966
31⅞ x 25⅛
Alexander Iolas, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Rome, Madrid

Index of lenders

Belgique, Collection Crédit Communal de 36
Brachot, Galerie Isy 2
Braun, Mr and Mrs Raymond J. 29
Bruges, Private collection 39
Brussels, Musées Royaux 5, 18, 41
Brussels, Private collections 20, 27, 51
Capuano, Joseph 34
Crowet, Pierre E. 3
Debernardi, Madame 72
De Knop Collection 48
Estorick, Mr and Mrs Eric 46
Garick Fine Arts, Inc. 24
Glasgall, Mr and Mrs Harry W. 76
Heinz, Mr and Mrs Henry J., II, 83
Houston, Rice University 94
Iolas, Alexander 100, 101
Jackson, Mr and Mrs Brooks 65
James Foundation, Edward 62
James, E. F. W. 54–6
Johns, Jasper 52
Kempner, Mr and Mrs Alan H. 91
Laughlin, Mr and Mrs James 35
London, Private collections 23, 37
Mabille, Marcel 12, 21
McCorquodale, Malcolm, Jnr 87
Magritte, Madame René 67, 93
Marcy, Madame Claude 45
Melly, George 44, 53
Menil, Adelaide de 75
Menil, D. and J. de 80, 86
Menil, Philippa de 78
Mesens, E. L. T. 4, 6, 13, 15, 19, 26, 33, 47, 50, 63, 77
Minneapolis Institute of Arts, The 82
Najar, Amiel E. 17
Nellens, Gustave J. 66, 81, 96
New York, Museum of Modern Art 7, 30
New York, Private collection 99
Oranmore and Browne, Oonagh, Lady 95
Penrose Collection 38, 57
Private collections 14, 25, 28, 59, 64, 89, 90
see also Bruges, Brussels, London, New York, U.S.A.
Rotterdam, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen 32
Spaak, Claude 1, 8, 40, 42, 43, 60, 61
Spaak, Madame Claude 9
Stockholm, Moderna Museet 49
Swan, Simone Withers 97
Thurman, Christophe de Menil 69
Torczyner, Harry 71, 73, 85, 98
Urvater Collection 10, 11, 16, 31, 58
U.S.A., Private collection 79
Vanparys, J. 70
Vienna, Museum des 20. Jahrhunderts 88
Wasserman, Mr and Mrs Max 74, 84
Weissberger, L. Arnold 92
Young, Mr and Mrs Arthur 68
Zeisler, Richard S. 22

Works illustrated which are not in the exhibition

L'air et la chanson
The air and the song
1928 or 1929
23¼ x 31½
William N. Copley Collection
Illus. p. 33

Les chasseurs au bord de la nuit
The hunters at the edge of night
1928
31⅞ x 45⅝
William N. Copley Collection
Illus. p. 60

L'évidence éternelle
The eternal evidence
1930
8¼ x 4¾ ; 7⅞ x 9½ ; 10¾ x 7⅝ ; 8¾ x 6¾ ; 8¾ x 4¾
William N. Copley Collection
Illus. p. 37

L'océan
The ocean
1943
19¾ x 25⅝
Private collection
Illus p. 65

La gravitation universelle
Universal gravitation
1943
39⅜ x 28¾
Collection Claude Hersaint, Paris
Illus. p. 80

Le vieux canonnier
The old gunner
1947
Private collection
Illus. p. 70

Le chant d'amour
The song of love
1948
31⅞ x 39⅜
Collection Mr and Mrs Joseph R. Shapiro, Illinois
Illus. p. 101

Le mois des vendanges
The time of the harvest
1959
51⅛ x 63¾
Collection Claude Hersaint, Paris
Illus. p. 110

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